CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

ON

POETRY,

PAINTING and MUSIC.

With

An Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Theatrical Entertainments of the Ancients.

Written in FRENCH

By the Abbé Du Bos, Member and perpetual Secretary of the French Academy.

Translated into ENGLISH by
THOMAS NUGENT, Gent.

From the fifth Edition revised, corrected, and inlarged by the Author.

Ut pictura poesis erit. Hor. de arte poet.

VOL. I.

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MDCCXLVIII.

CRITICAL PREFERENCES

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Tr'ANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE TRANSLATOR'S PREFAC

THERE have been very few books published of late years that have met with a better reception, or attained to a greater reputation in the learned world, than the following Critical This is a truth so well known to Reflections. most judges of polite learning, that it would be unnecessary to attempt to illustrate the character either of the author or his performance. As for what concerns this translation, I have very little to fay, but that I have endeavoured as much as possible to render it not unworthy of the public acceptance. I have taken care to observe a middle way between too loofe a paraphrase, and too literal a version; my chief aim being to convey the spirit as well as sense of the original. The quotations from the Greek writers, which are pretty numerous, especially in the third volume, are copied in the French original from Latin translations; not that our author was unacquainted with the Greek, but because this language is not so generally understood in that kingdom. However as this reason is of no weight in England, where most people that understand Latin, have some tincture at least of the Greek, I have therefore taken the liberty

berty to deviate here from our author, by giving these quotations in their original language. The translations of the classic poets are taken from our best writers; and the passages of Boileau are from the English version of this poet done by several bands. A few lines from Racine, Corneille, and others, I have attempted myself, not intending they should be looked upon as poetry (for I may say with the satyrist, Nec fonte labra prolui caballino) but only to preserve by some kind of versification a greater air of conformity with the French. The reader will find, that most of the quotations from the Greek and Latin writers are rendered rather by a kind of paraphrase than translation; wherefore it will not be amiss to acquaint him that these passages are englished from the French translation, and not from the originals; lest by making a more exact version we should have lost the author's meaning, who by means of his paraphrase frequently strikes out something that helps to prove his point. I need not mention any thing with regard to my own mistakes; I hope there are none but such as are excusable in an undertaking of this nature, and that the reader will be able to trace in this imperfect copy some faint resemblance of the beauties of the excellent original.

TABLE

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The third part a Hirwork is laid out intirely in explaining toine discoveries, which,

Author's Advertisement.

I N the first part of this work I endeavour to explain what the beauty of a picture or poem chiefly consists in; what merit both may draw from conforming to rules; and what affistance their productions may borrow of other arts, in order to shine forth with greater lustre.

In the second part, I treat of the qualifications, whether natural or acquired, necessary to form great painters or poets. I inquire here likewise into the reasons of some ages being so fertile, and others so barren of celebrated artists. I examine afterwards into the means, whereby the reputation of illustrious artists has been raised; by what marks one can fore-tell, whether the same, they have acquired in their days, be transient, or durable; and sinally, what those presages are which impower us to predict, that the same of a painter or poet, cried up by his cotemporaries, will continue to increase, so as to arrive to a much

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vi The Author's Advertisement.

higher degree of veneration in future ages, than at the time he lived.

The third part of this work is laid out intirely in explaining some discoveries, which, methinks, I have made in relation to the theatrical entertainments of the ancients. In the preceding editions of my book, this discourse on the ancient theatres occurs in the first part, having placed it where it feemed to fall in with the nature of the subject. But I have been fince reminded, that my digreffion, where it was first, interrupted the reader's view of the principal matter. I have been therefore advised to throw it into a separate volume; an advice which I have complied with the more readily, as the improvements and additions. I had to make to the discourse here mentioned, would have rendered my fault much more inexcufable. rds into the means,



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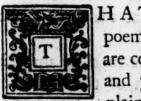


CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

ON

POETRY and PAINTING.

PART I.



HAT a fensible pleasure arises from poems and pictures, is a truth we are convinced of by daily experience; and yet 'tis a difficult matter to explain the nature of this pleasure,

which bears so great a resemblance with affliction, and whose symptoms are sometimes as affecting, as those of the deepest forrow. The arts of poetry and painting are never more applauded, than when they are most successful in moving us to pity.

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The pathetic representation of the sacrifice of Jephtha's daughter, set in a frame, is one of the most elegant ornaments of a sumptuous cabinet. The several grotesque sigures, and most smiling compositions of painters of the gayest fancies, pass unobserved, to attend to this tragical picture. A poem, the chief subject whereof is the violent death of a young princes, graces the most august solemnity; and the tragedy is marked out for one of the principal amusements of a company assembled for their diversion. 'Tis observable, that we feel in general a greater pleasure in weeping, than in laughing at a theatrical representation.

In short, the more our compassion would have been raised by such actions as are described by poetry and painting, had we really beheld them; the more in proportion the imitations attempted by those arts are capable of affecting us. These actions are universally allowed to be the happiest and noblest subjects. It must be therefore a secret charm that draws our attention to the imitations made by those arts, whilst our nature seels an inward dread and repugnance at the sight of its

own pleasure.

I shall venture to undertake to clear up this paradox, and explain the origin of that pleasure, which we receive from poems and paintings. Attempts of a less arduous nature have been frequently charged with temerity. Tis an attempt to unfold to man the causes of his approbation and dislike: an attempt to instruct him concerning the nature of his own fentiments, how they rise and

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are formed within him. I cannot therefore flatter myself with the hopes of my reader's approbation, unless I succeed in endeavouring to lay open to him what passes within himself; that is, in one word, the most inward motions of his heart. 'Tis natural to reject as untrue the glass, wherein we perceive no resemblance of our own features.

Those who write on subjects of a less sensible nature, have it frequently in their power to err with impunity. To detect their mistakes, a great deal of reslection, and sometimes inquiry, is necessary, but the subject which comes under my examination, is most obvious and intelligible. Every man is possessed of a standard rule applicable to my arguments, so as to discover easily the least devia-

tion they may have from truth.

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On the other hand, 'tis rendering an important fervice to those two arts, (arts, that are ranked amongst the most accomplished ornaments of polite fociety) to inquire philosophically into the nature and manner of the effects arifing from their productions. A book which could lay open the heart of man, when moved by a poem, or affected with a picture, would give our artists a very just and extensive view of the general effect of their works, whereof they feem to have so imperfect an idea. I must beg the indulgence of those gentlemen, for giving them fo frequently, in the course of this work, the appellation of artists. The regard which, upon all occasions, I express for their respective arts, will be sufficient to convince them. that my not adding illustrious, or fome other pro-

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per epithet to artift, proceeds only from my apprehension of falling into repetition. The desire of rendering them service is one of my inducements to publish these reflections, which I offer as the obfervations of a plain fellow-citizen, drawn from the examples of past ages, in order to enable their republic to be more upon its guard against future inconveniencies. If at any time I happen to affume a legislative tone, the reader will please to excuse it, as proceeding from inadvertency, rather than from any notion I entertain of my legislative authority.

CHAP.

Of the necessity of occupation, in order to avoid beaviness; and of the attractives which the motions of the passions have with regard to man.

HE natural pleasures of man are always the fruits of indigence, which is what Plato meant, perhaps, by that allegorical expression of his, that love is the offspring of want and abundance. Let those that instruct the public with philosophical tracts, expound the wonders of the divine providence, in using such various precautions and methods to induce man, by the allurement of pleasure, to attend to his own preservation: 'tis sufficient for me, that this is an uncontested truth, to form thereof the basis of my reasonings.

In proportion to the greatness of our wants, the pleasure of gratifying them is attended with a greater or lesser degree of sensibility. Those who approach the most delicious banquets, without a preparation of appetite, seel not half so much pleasure as those, who with a hungry stomach sit down to a homely entertainment. Nature is impersectly supplied by art, and the most exquisite contrivances of the latter can never prepare us for so much pleasure as hunger and indigence.

The foul hath its wants no less than the body; and one of the greatest wants of man is to have his mind incessantly occupied. The heaviness which quickly attends the inactivity of the mind, is a situation so very disagreeable to man, that he frequently chuses to expose himself to the most painful exercises, rather than be troubled with it.

'Tis eafy to comprehend in what manner bodily labor, even that which feems to require the least application, employs the foul. Exclusive of external exercise, there are still two other methods of occupying the mind. The first is, when the soul is affected by external objects, which is what we call, a sensible impression: the other is, when she amuses herself with the speculation of useful or curious subjects, which is properly to reslect and meditate.

This fecond kind of occupation is disagreeable, and sometimes even impracticable to the soul, B 3 especially especially when 'tis not an actual or recent sentiment that employs her reflections. For she is then obliged to make continual efforts in pursuit of the object of her attention, and those efforts being frequently rendered ineffectual by the present dispofition of the organs of the brain, terminate in an empty and fruitless application. Or else it happens that the imagination, grown too warm, prefents no longer a distinct object, but is hurried away by a tumultuary fuccession of innumerable unconnected ideas; or, finally, the mind fatigued with so close an application, seeks to unbend itself; and a dull heavy pensiveness, unattended with the enjoyment of any one particular object, is the fruit of the efforts it has made for its amusement. Every man must have experienced the weariness of that state, wherein he finds himself incapable of thinking; as well as the uneafiness of that fituation, wherein he is forced into a tumultuous variety of thought, unable to fix his choice upon any one particular object. There are very few fo happy as to be but feldom liable to one of those two situations, or even capable of being commonly good company to themselves: few that can make themfelves masters of that art, which, to express myfelf in the words of Horace, teacheth a man to live in friendship with himself: Quod te tibi reddat amicum. To attain to that perfection, a certain temperament of body is necessary, which leaves those that are possessed thereof, as much indebted to providence, as the eldest fons of princes. 'Tis requisite also to have made an early application to study,

fludy, and to such other occupations, as demand a great deal of reflection. The mind ought to have contracted a habit of ranging its thoughts, and of reflecting on what it reads; for the bare running over a subject, without any action of the mind, and without sustaining it with proper reflections, becomes frequently laborious and tire-some. But the imagination, by constant exercise, is subdued, and growing docile, submits to whatever laws we please to prescribe. By dint of meditating, we acquire a habit of transferring our thoughts with ease to a diversity of matters, or of fixing it to any one particular object.

This felf-conversation rescues those, who are practised therein, from the abovementioned state of heaviness and misery. But, as I have already observed, the number of those, whom a sweetness of blood, and happy mixture of humors, has destined for such a gentle retired life, is very inconsiderable. The generality of mankind are unacquainted with the state of their own minds, and most of them judging of what others suffer from solitude, by the manner they are affected therewith themselves, conclude of course, that solitude must be a situation universally disagreeable.

The first of the abovementioned methods of occupying one's self, which is that of yielding to the impression of external objects, is much the easiest. 'Tis the only resource, which the greatest part of mankind have against weariness of mind; and even those who can employ their time otherwise, are frequently obliged, in order to avoid being tired with

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the fameness of their occupations, to have recourse to the common amusements of mankind. The changes of toil and pleasure set the spirits, that began to grow heavy, in motion, and seem to restore fresh vigor to the exhausted imagination.

Hence we behold mankind embarraffed in fo many idle and frivolous occupations. Hence we fee fuch numbers of mortals fo eager in pursuit of what they call their pleasures, notwithstanding their being convinced of the unhappy confequences thereof by their own experience. The disquiet arifing from business, and the motions thereby given to man, cannot be in themselves agreeable. Those passions, which are attended with the highest pleasures, are likewise productive of the most durable and acutest pains; nevertheless, man has still a greater dread of the heaviness which succeeds inaction, and finds in the buftle of bufiness, and in the turnult of his passions, a motion that amufes him. The agitations which they excite, are even revived in folitude, and prevent man from entering into himself, without finding employment; whereby he escapes falling into the languid state of heaviness and affliction. When men, grown surfeited of what we call the world, come to a determination of renouncing it, 'tis but very feldom they stick to their resolution. Upon coming to make a trial of an inactive life, and comparing the pain they fuffered from the perplexity of business, and the inquietude of their passions, with the irksomeness of a state of indolence, they soon regret the tumultuous fituation, which they had fo much difrelished. They

They are oftentimes unjustly accused with having made a shew of a pretended moderation, upon their engaging in a retired life. 'Tis likely however they acted with sincerity; but as the excess of action had induced them to long for a state of tranquillity, so too much leisure and indolence makes them regret the time, when they had such a multiplicity of amusements. Men are more addicted to levity than hypocrify; and frequently they are only guilty of inconstancy, when they are charged with dissimulation.

In fact, the hurry and agitation, in which our passions keep us, even in solitude, is of so brisk a nature, that any other situation is languid and heavy, when compared to this motion. Thus we are led by instinct, in pursuit of objects capable of exciting our passions, notwithstanding those objects make impressions on us, which are frequently attended with nights and days of pain and calamity: but man in general would be exposed to greater misery, were he exempt from passions, than the very passions themselves can make him suffer.



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CHAP. II.

Of the attractives of spectacles proper for exciting great emotions.

Of Gladiators.

HAT natural emotion, which rifes, as it were, mechanically within us, upon feeing our fellow creatures in any great misfortune or danger, hath no other attractive, but that of being a paffion, the motions whereof rouse and occupy the foul; nevertheless, this very emotion has charms capable of rendering it defirable, notwithstanding all the gloomy and importunate ideas that attend it. A motion, which reason attempts in vain to restrain, engages multitudes in the pursuit of objects, that are only capable of affording scenes of affliction. We see crowds of people flock to one of the most frightful spectacles, that human nature can behold, that is, the public execution of a man upon a scaffold, where he undergoes the most exquisite torments inflicted by the law: nevertheless, one ought naturally to foresee, even without any previous experience, that the circumstances of the punishment, and the groans of one's fellow creature, will make fo deep and fo forcible an impreffion, as not to be eafily effaced; but the attractive of the emotion felt on those occasions, carries a greater weight with it than all the reflections and advice of experience. The frightful fpectacles here mentioned,

POETRY and PAINTING. II

mentioned, occur frequently, and are attended conflantly with a crowd of spectators in all parts of the world.

'Tis this very attractive which makes us fond of the disquiets and alarms, occasioned by the perils which we see other men exposed to, whilst we are exempt ourselves from danger. 'Tis pleasant, says Lucretius, to behold from the seashore, a vessel struggling with the waves which are just ready to swallow it up; or to be spectator of a battle from an eminence, where there is no apprehension of danger.

Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis E terra alterius magnum spectare laborem: Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri Per campos instructa tui sine parte pericli. Lucr. de nat. Rer. 1. 2.

And view another's danger, safe at land:

Not'cause be's troubled, but 'twas sweet to see

Those cares and sears, from which ourselves

are free.

Tis also pleasant to behold from far How troops engage, secure ourselves from war.

CREECH.

In proportion as the movements of a rope-dancer are more or less dangerous, the attention of the spectators is raised or abated. If in his dancing between two swords, the hear of his motion should chance to sling him an inch out of the line he is confined to, he becomes instantly a proper object

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of our curiofity. Put but a couple of flicks, inflead of two fwords, or let the tumbler flretch his cord only two foot high in the middle of a meadow, the very fame leaps and movements as he made before, will be thought no longer worth looking at, and the spectator's attention will terminate with the danger.

Hence arose that excess of pleasure, which the Romans felt at the spectacles of the amphitheatre. They not only exposed men to be torn alive by wild beafts, but likewise set gladiators on the stage, to cut one another's throats. They grew even ingenious in the inventions of the bloody instruments, which those unfortunates were to use in this butcherly entertainment. It was not by mere chance that the Retiarius, and the Mirmillo, were differently armed; but a just proportion between the offensive and defensive weapons of those a Quadrils, was industriously contrived, in order to render their combats longer, and more liable to a variety of accidents. They would even have them expire more gradually, and with a greater appear-Different Quadrils were made to ance of terror. fight with different arms, to diversify thereby the pleasure of the spectators, by varying the death of those poor men who were frequently innocent. They were even fed with a particular kind of nourishment in order to keep them in good plight, that their blood might flow more gently from their wounds, and the spectators have a longer enjoyment

Datants used to divide themselves at tournaments.

of the horrors of their agony. The profession of instructing the gladiators was become an art; and the relish which the Romans had for this fort of combats, made them so curious as to introduce a kind of delicacy and grace into a spectacle, which we cannot, in our days, even think of without horror. Those fencing masters a, who had the care of instructing the gladiators, were not only obliged to teach them how to use their arms, but likewise to learn those unhappy victims the very attitude they were to compose themselves in for death, when mortally wounded. Thus their masters gave them the method, as it were, of expiring with a good grace.

Those spectacles were not introduced into Rome by means of the rufticity and fierceness of the five first centuries immediately succeeding its foundation. When the two Brutus's gave the Romans the first combat of gladiators that was ever reprefented in that city, the Romans were then a civilized and polished nation: and yet the humanity and politeness of succeeding ages was so far from giving them a diflike to the barbarous spectacles of the amphitheatre, that, on the contrary, it rendered them more passionately fond of them. The veftal virgins had feats marked out for them in the first row of the amphitheatre, at a time when the Roman politeness was at its highest pitch, when a man was deemed a barbarian, if be branded his flave for stealing a table cloth, a crime for which the laws of most Christian countries condemn our domestics to death, tho' they are equally free born as ourselves.

An sævire docet Rutilus qui gaudet acerbo
Plagarum strepitu, & nullam sirena flagellis
Comparat Antiphates trepidi laris, ac Polyphemus?
Tum felix quoties aliquis, tortore vocato,

Tum felix quoties aliquis, tortore vocato, Utitur ardenti duo propter lintea ferro.

Juv. fat. 14.

The inhuman lord, who with a cruel gust

Can a red fork in his slave's forehead thrust,

Because th' unlucky criminal was caught

With little theft of two coarse towels fraught.

DRYDEN

But the Romans were seized with such emotions at the amphitheatre, as they never selt at the theatre, nor circus. The combats of gladiators were not put down at Rome, till the Christian religion became predominant, when Constantine the great suppressed them by an express edict. The Romans had already condemned, five hundred years before, this passion of theirs for the spectacles of gladiators, by forbidding the subjects of the republic to facrifice human victims; when the combats here treated of were first abolished.

The show of the gladiators was relished by the Greeks, as soon as it made its first appearance amongst them; they accustomed themselves

domethics

Cod. Just. 1. x. tit. 44. leg. unica.

Plin. hift, lib. trig. cap. 1.

afterwards gradually thereto, tho' they had not been made acquainted with all its horrors in its infancy: The principles of morality, which the Greeks had been brought up in, debarred them from entertaining any other fentiments but those of aversion for a spectacle, where frequently the lives of innocent men were facrificed to the idle diversion of the spectators.

Under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes king of

Syria, the arts and sciences, which correct the fierce temper of man, and even fometimes enervate too much his courage, had flourished a long time in all those provinces that were inhabited by the Greeks. Some practices formerly used in their funeral games, which might have been imagined to bear a refemblance with the combats of the gladiators, had been long fince abolished. Antiochus, who had formed vast projects, and to make them succeed, had recourse to that kind of magnificence which is properest to ingratiate a sovereign with his subjects, fent to Rome for gladiators, at a very great expence, in order to treat the Greeks, a people fond of shows, with a new kind of fpectacle. Probably he might have imagined, that the vulgar, by affifting at those combats, would be inspired with that contempt of death, which had rendered the legions more resolute than the phalanxes in those wars, in which his father Antiochus the great, and Philip king of Macedon, had been vanquished by the Romans. At first, says Livy, this kind of show was rather an object of borror than entertainment. 'Tis natural to imagine, that the Greeks, a people extremely felfconceited, and bred up with a contempt of those they called barbarians, must have railed, on this occasion, against the want of lenity in other nations; but Antiochus was far from being therewith discouraged. In order to bring them gradually acquainted with this new spectacle, he made the champions, on their first mounting the Arena, only just draw blood. Our Greek philosophers took pleasure, at first, in gazing at this milder sort of combats, but soon after grew acquainted with those of a bloodier nature, and babituated themselves to behold, frequently, men slaughter one another for the public diversion. At length, the thing was pushed so far, that a company of gladiators was formed even in their own country *:

There is a neighbouring nation fo prodigioully sparing of man's sufferings, as to have a kind of a regard for human nature even in the greatest malesactors. They chuse rather that a criminal should frequently escape those punishments, which the interest of civil society demands should be inslicted on him, than permit an innocent man to be exposed to such torments, as judges use in other christian countries, in order to extort

Gladiatorum munus Romanæ consuetudinis primo majore cum terrore hominum insuetorum ad tale spectaculum, quam cum voluptate dedit. Deinde sæpius dando & vulneribus tenus, mo do sine missione, etiam & samiliare oculis gratumque id spectaculum secit, & armorum studium plerisque juvenum accendit. Itaque qui primò a Roma paratos gladiatores magnis præmiis arcessere solitus erat, jam suo, &c. Livius, l. 41.

from the guilty a confession of their crimes. The capital punishments established amongst them, are those only which deprive the criminal of his life, without any other pain or torture but what is necessary for that purpose. And yet this very people, fo full of lenity and respect for human nature, take a particular delight in feeing beafts tear one another to pieces. They have even rendered those animals capable of killing one another with artificial weapons, to whom nature has refused arms sufficient for a mortal blow. This fame nation beholds also, with pleasure, a parcel of fellows, hired on purpose to beat and bruife one another most dangerously; infomuch, that we should imagine they would certainly renew the Roman shows of gladiators, if the effusion of human blood, except in cases of necessity, were not so expressly forbidden in Scripture.

The same may be said of other very polite nations, who make also profession of a religion averse to the essusion of human blood. Were not tournaments the highest diversion of our ancestors? And yet were they not spectacles, wherein the combatants used to run an evident risk of their lives? Have not the wounds of the blunted lance been sometimes as mortal as those of the lance with pointed steel? France had too dear an experience thereof, when Henry II. was mortally wounded in one of those solemnities. But our annals surnish us with a much stronger proof, that even the most cruel specta-

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cles have a kind of an allurement to captivate the affections of people of the greatest humanity. The camp-sights, between two or more champions, prevailed a long while in this kingdom, where several of the principal personages of the nation used to draw their swords from a much more serious motive than that of diverting the spectators; that is, with an intent of deciding their private quarrels by the death of their antagonists. People notwithstanding slocked from all parts to assist at those combats, by way of sport; and the court of Henry II. in other respects so very polite, was present at the duel between Jarnac and Chategneraie at St Germans.

The entertainments of bull-fighting are frequently attended with the death of the combatants. A grenadier is not more exposed to danger at the attack of a covert-way, than those champions are in their engagements with those furious animals. The Spaniards notwithstanding, of all ranks and conditions, feem to be as paffionately fond of this dangerous kind of sport, as the Romans were formerly of the entertainments of the amphitheatre. Several Popes have used their utmost efforts to abolish this practice of bull-fighting, but their endeavours have been hitherto fruitless; and the Spanish nation, which prides itself for its submission to the Roman See. hath not shewn as yet, in this point, a proper regard to their remonstrances. Thus the pleasing charm of emotion cancels the first principles of humanity manity in the most polite and most tenderhearted nations; and obliterates, in people of the greatest christianity, the most evident maxims of their religion.

There are feveral who expose daily a confiderable part of their fubftance to the mercy of cards and dice, notwithstanding their being perfectly sensible of the unhappy confequences of high gaming. Those whom fortune has enriched at play, are known and pointed at all over Europe, like those who have had any remarkable and extraordinary adventure; whilft men of substance, who have been ruined by gaming, furpass in number the robust, whom physicians have reduced to infirmity. 'Tis only fools and knaves that play from an avaricious motive, and with a view of accumulating wealth by a continual fuccess at gaming. It cannot be therefore faid, that 'tis avarice, but the very attractive of gaming, which induces fuch numbers of people to ruin their fortunes. In fact, an able gamester, who has a capacity for combining eafily a variety of circumstances, and inferring from thence a just train of consequences, fuch a gamefter, I fay, might be fure of playing every day to a certain advantage, would he but chuse to risk his money only at those games where fuccess depends more on the ability of the players, than on the hazard of cards and dice: Nevertheless, he gives the preference to those games, where profit is diffributed by the caprice of fortune, and where his superior abilities give him no manner of advantage over the rest

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of the players. The reason of a choice so oppofite to his interest, is, that those games, where fuccess depends in great measure on the capacity of the player, require a more continued application of mind; besides, they do not keep the foul in fuch a continual agitation as Lanfquenet, Baffet, and other games, the event whereof depends intirely upon hazard. In the latter, as every stroke is decifive, and each event attended with loss or profit, the foul is of course in a kind of extafy, without there being any occasion to contribute to its pleasure by a serious attention; a thing which through laziness we are always defirous of avoiding. Laziness is a vice which may be furmounted fometimes, but can never be utterly extirpated. Probably this may be an advantage to fociety, for 'tis the opinion of feveral, that laziness alone prevents more wicked actions than all the virtues put together.

Those who are fond of wine, or addicted to any other vice, are frequently more sensible of the unhappy consequences thereof, than those who attempt to admonish them; but the soul is naturally inclinable to resign itself to whatsoever occupies it, without being at the trouble of acting with too intense an application. Hence the greatest part of mankind are subject to tastes and inclinations which furnish them with frequent opportunities of amusing themselves agreably with quick and pleasing sensations. Trabit sua quemque voluptas. The general aim and view of all men

is

all alike, the pleasures which they pursue are of a various nature.

CHAP. III.

That the principal merit of poems and pictures confifts in the imitation of such objects as would have excited real passions. The passions which those imitations give rise to, are only superficial.

SINCE the most pleasing sensations that our real passions can afford us, are balanced by so many unhappy hours that succeed our enjoyments, would it not be a noble attempt of art to endeavour to separate the dismal consequences of our passions from the bewitching pleasure we receive in indulging them? Is it not in the power of art to create, as it were, beings of a new nature? Might not art contrive to produce objects that would excite artificial passions, sufficient to occupy us while we are actually affected by them, and incapable of giving us afterwards any real pain or affliction?

An attempt of so delicate a nature was referved for poetry and painting. I do not pretend to say, that the first painters and poets, no more than other artists, whose performances may not perhaps be inferior to theirs, had such exalted C 3 ideas,

ideas, or fuch extensive views, upon their first sitting down to work. The first inventers of bathing never dreamt of its being a remedy proper for the curing of certain distempers; they only made use of it as a kind of refreshment in fultry weather, though afterwards it was difcovered to be extreamly ferviceable to human bodies in feveral disorders: In like manner, the first poets and painters had nothing more in view perhaps, than to flatter our fenses and imagination; and in labouring with that defign, they found out the manner of exciting artificial passions. The most useful discoveries in fociety, have been commonly the effect of hazard: Be that as it will, those imaginary passions which poetry and painting raise artisicially within us, by means of their imitations, fatisfy that natural want we have of being employed.

Painters and poets raise those artificial passions within us, by presenting us with the imitations of objects capable of exciting real passions. As the impression made by those imitations is of the same nature with that which the object imitated by the painter or poet would have made; and as the impression of the imitation differs from that of the object imitated only in its being of an inferior force, it ought therefore to raise in our souls a passion resembling that which the object imitated would have excited In other terms, the copy of the object ought to the object ought to object up within us a copy of the passion which the

object itself would have excited. But as the impression made by the imitation is not fo deep as that which the object itself would have made: moreover, as the impression of the imitation is not ferious, inafmuch as it does not affect our reason, which is superior to the illusory attack of those fensations, as we shall presently explain more at large: Finally, as the impression made by the imitation affects only the fensitive foul, it has confequently no great durability. This superficial impression, made by imitation, is quickly therefore effaced, without leaving any permanent veftiges, fuch as would have been left by the impression of the object itself, which the painter or poet hath imitated.

The reason of the difference between the impression made by the object, and that made by the imitation, is obvious. The most finished imitation hath only an artificial existence, or a borrowed life; whereas the force and activity of nature meet in the object imitated. We are influenced by the real object, by virtue of the power which it hath received for that end from nature. In things which we propose for imitation, fays Quintilian, there is the strength and efficacy of nature, whereas in imitation there is only the weakness of fiction?. The many and addition on

Here then we discover the source of that pleafure which poetry and painting give to man. Here we fee the cause of that satisfaction we find in

^{*} Namque iis quæ in exemplum assumimus, subest natura & vera vis, contra omnis imitatio ficta. Quint. Inft. lib. 10. cap. 2.

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pictures, the merit whereof consists in setting before our eyes such tragical adventures, as would
have struck us with horror, had we been spectators of their reality. For as Aristotle in his
Poetics says, Tho' we should be loth to look at
monsters, and people in agony, yet we gaze on those
very objects with pleasure when copied by painters;
and the better they are copied, the more satisfaction
we have in beholding them.

The pleasure we feel in contemplating the imitations made by painters and poets, of objects which would have raised in us passions attended with real pain, is a pleasure free from all impurity of mixture. It is never attended with those disagreable consequences, which arise from the serious emotions caused by the object itself.

A few examples will illustrate, better than all my arguments, an opinion, which, methinks, I can never set in too clear a light. The massacre of the innocents must have left most gloomy impressions in the imaginations of those, who were real spectators of the barbarity of the soldiers slaughtering the poor infants in the bosom of their mothers, all imbrued with blood. Le Brun's picture, where we see the imitation of this tragical event, moves indeed our humanity, but leaves no troublesome idea in our mind; it excites our compassion, without piercing us with

^{*} Σημείον δε τότα το σύμδαινον επί των ερίων α γαρ αὐτα λυπηςως όςωμεν, τάτων τας εἰκόνας τας μάλιςα ἀκριδωμένας, χαίρομεν θεωρύνες, οἰον θηρίων τε μορφας των ἀγριωθάτων, τὸ νεκρων.
Arist. Poet. cap. 4.

real affliction. A death like that of Phædra, a young princess expiring in the midst of the most frightful convulsions, and accusing herself of the most flagitious crimes, which she has endeavoured to expiate with poison; such a death, I say, as that, would be one of the most frightful and most difagreable objects. We should be a long time before we could get rid of the black and gloomy ideas which fuch a spectacle would undoubtedly imprint in our imagination. The tragedy of Racine, wherein the imitation of that event is represented, touches us most fensibly, without leaving any permanent feed of affliction. We are pleased with the enjoyment of our emotion, without being under any apprehension of its too long continuance. This piece of Racine draws tears from us, though we are touched with no real forrow; for the grief that appears is only, as it were, on the furface of our heart, and we are fenfible, that our tears will finish with the representation of the ingenious fiction that gave them birth.

We listen therefore with pleasure to those unhappy men, who make a recital of their missortunes by means of a painter's pencil, or of a poet's verses; but, as Diogenes Laertius observes, it would afflist us extreamly, were we to bear them bewailing their sad disasters in person. The painter and poet afflict us only inasmuch as we desire it ourselves; they make us fall in love with their heroes and heroins, only because it is thus agreable to

^{*} Τῶν γοῦν μιμυμένων θρήνυς ἡδέως ἀκούομεν τῶν δὶ κατὰ ἀλήθειαν, ἀπδῶς. Diogenes in Aristippo.

us; whereas we should be neither able to command the measure of our sentiments, nor regulate their vivacity nor duration, were we to be struck by the very objects which those noble artists have imitated.

True it is, that young people, who grow paffionately fond of reading romances, the charms of which confist in poetic imitations, are subject to be troubled with real affliction and desire; but these inconveniences are not the necessary consequences of the artificial emotion caused by the description of Cyrus and Mandane. This artificial emotion is only an occasional cause, by somenting in the hearts of young persons, that have so great a relish for romances, the principles of those natural passions which are implanted in them, and by disposing them to be more susceptible of serious and passionate sentiments for those who are in the way of inspiring them: 'Tis not Cyrus or Mandane that are the subject of their agitations.

Some men are also reported to have resigned themselves up intirely to the impressions of poetic imitations, insomuch that reason could never after resume its rights over their bewildered imaginations. The adventure of the inhabitants of Abdera is well known, who were so struck with the tragic images of Euripides's Andromeda, that the imitation made as serious, and as strong an impression upon them, as could have been possibly made by the thing imitated; in short, they were berest of their understandings for some time, as it might have happened, had

they

they been spectators of any real tragical adventure. The example also of a great wit of the last century, may be produced, who was so affected with the pictures drawn in Aftrea, as to imagine himself the successor of those happy shepherds whose country is to be found no where but in prints and hangings. His diftempered brain made him commit extravagances equal to those which Cervantes makes his Don Quixot guilty of in a fimilar kind of folly, after fuppoling, that the reading of the prowelles of chivalry had turned this poor gentleman's brain.

'Tis very rare to find people, who are at the fame time fo very tender-hearted and weakheaded; admitting that any fuch exist, their number must be so very inconsiderable, as not to merit even the name of an exception to this our . general rule, that the foul continues always mistress of those superficial motions which poems

and pictures excite within us.

There is even room to imagine, that the abovementioned visionary shepherd would never have taken up his crook nor fcrip, if the daily fight of real thepherds had not contributed to his folly: All that can therefore be allowed is that his passion would not have hurried him into such odd extravagances if his imagination had not been over-heated with the reading of the chimerical characters of Aftrea. With regard to the adventure of Abdera, the fact is less manyellous asvis generally the case, in the original author, than in the narrative of those who give it us at second

(* I.no. in his method of writing history

or third hand. All that Lucian a fays relating thereto, is, that the Abderitans having affifted at the representation of Euripides's Andromeda, during the violent summer heats, several of them, who were afterwards taken ill, repeated some verses of the said tragedy in the raging transports of their fever; which was very natural, as that was the last thing that had made an impression upon them. Lucian adds, that the winter colds, whose property it is to remove epidemical disorders proceeding from excess of heat, put an end at once to their malady and declamation.

CHAP. IV.

Of the power which imitations have over us; and of the facility wherewith the heart is moved.

Within us by the productions of poets, is a truth which no body has attempted to dispute; but it will seem extraordinary to a great many, and perhaps to some painters themselves, that pictures, that is, colors laid on canvas, should be capable of raising our passions; and yet this ought to surprize only those who are unattentive to what passes within themselves. Is it possible to behold Poussin's picture, representing the

Luc. in his method of writing history.

death of Germanicus, without being touched with compassion for this prince and his family, and feized with indignation against Tiberius? The Graces of the gallery of Luxemburg, and feveral other pieces, would not have been disfigured, could their owners have looked at them without emotion; for all pictures are not of that fort of which Aristotle says, that there are pictures as capable of reclaiming men, as precepts of moral philosophy a. Do persons that are over nice and delicate, fuffer in their cabinets any pictures representing monftrous and hideous figures, fuch as, for example, the picture of Prometheus tied to a rock, drawn by Michael Angelo'? The imitation of the frightful object would make an impression upon them, too fimilar to that which would have been made by the object itself. S. Gregory, of Nazianzum, relates a flory of a courtezan, who happening to cast her eyes, in a place where she was not come with a defign of making any ferious reflections, upon the portrait of one Polemon, a philosopher famous for an almost miraculous change of life, entered into herfelf at the fight thereof, and imitated the philosopher in his conversion. We read in Cedrenus, that a picture representing the day of judgment, contributed very much to the conversion of the king of the Bulgarians. Those who in all ages have had the government of nations, have generally made use of pictures and statues, to inspire the people thereby, with religious or political fentiments.

Those objects have always made a great impression on mankind, especially in countries where they have a very great vivacity of spirit, as in the most southern parts of Europe, and the opposite parts of Asia and Afric. We need only recollect the prohibition made by the tables of the law to the Jews, to paint or carve any human sigure; the impression made thereby, was too great for a people naturally inclinable to grow passionately fond of all objects capable of moving them.

In some protestant countries, where, with a view of reformation, pictures and statues have been expelled the churches, the government nevertheless makes use of the influence which painting hath naturally over mankind, to restrain thereby the people within the due respect and reverence of the laws. We observe over the placarts, where those laws are written, pictures representing the punishments to which the infringers of the law are condemned. It feems therefore, that in this country, which abounds with political observators, who extend their attention to feveral things which pass unregarded in other countries; it feems, I fay, that our observators have remarked, that these pictures were proper for inftilling into children, who were one day to grow up to the state of manhood, a fear and dread of the chaftisements inflicted by the law. In the republic now mentioned, they teach their children to read in books adapted to their tender capacities, and filled with little pictures representing the chief events events that have happened in their country, and which are thought most proper for inspiring them with aversion to the power of Europe, whose designs are at that time most suspected by the republic. If the system of Europe happens to change, they make another book for their children, and substitute the power that is grown formidable to their government, instead of that which has ceased to be so.

The profession of Quintilian was, that of teaching men the art of perfuading others, by forceof eloquence; and yet Quintilian puts the power of painting in competition with that of the art of rhetoric. It penetrates in such a manner, says Quintilian, when speaking of the art of painting , into the most inward recesses of the soul, as to feem to surpass sometimes even the force of eloquence. The fame author relates b, that he had fometimes feen the accusers hang up a picture on the tribunal, wherein the crimes of the person, whom they profecuted, were represented, in order to excite more effectually, the judge's indignation against the criminal. Thus the art of painting was called up to the alliftance of eloquence, at a time when the latter was arrived at his highest pitch of e are moved by the tears of a firanoifsoreq

Sic in intimos penetrat sensus, ut wim dicendi nonnunquam superare vidoqtur. QUINT, Inft. 1, 11. cap. 3.

Et ipse aliquando vidi depictam tabulam supra Jovem, in imaginem rei cujus atrocitate judex erat commovendus.

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When we give ourselves time to reflect on the natural fenfibility of the heart of man, on his proclivity to be moved by the feveral objects, which poets and painters make the subjects of their imitations, we find it very far from being furprizing, that even verses and pictures have the power of moving him. Nature has thought proper to implant this quick and easy fensibility in man as the very basis of society. Self-love generally degenerates into an immoderate fondness of one's own person; and, in proportion, as men advance in years, renders them too much attached to their present and future interests, and too inflexible towards one another, when they enter deliberately upon any resolution. It was therefore neceffary, that man should be easily drawn out of this situation. Nature, for this reason, has thought proper to form us in fuch a manner, as the agitation of whatever approaches us should have the power of impelling us, to the end, that those, who have need of our indulgence or succour, may, with greater facility, perfuade us. Thus their emotion alone is sufficient to soften us; whereby they obtain what they could never compass by dint of argument and conviction. We are moved by the tears of a stranger, even before we are apprized of the subject of his weeping. The cries of a man, to whom we have no other relation than the common one of humanity, make us fly instantly to his affistance, by a mechanical movement previous to all deliberation. A person that accosts us with joy painted on his countenance 00/17/

countenance, excites in us a like sentiment of joy; even before we know the subject of his contentment.

Ut ridentibus arrident, ita flentibus adflent Humani vultus. Hon. de arte.

We laugh or weep, as we see others do; Our souls agree, and take their passions too.

penet next with those tentiments

CREECH.

How comes it that those actors, who feel a real passion in declaiming, notwithstanding their being guilty of some essential faults in the execution of their parts, have nevertheless the power of moving and pleasing us? 'Tis because those who are moved themselves, find it an easy matter to communicate their passions. The actors of whom I speak, are really touched, which enables them to move us, notwithstanding their being incapable of expressing the passions with a due elevation and justness of character. They do all that is in their power; and nature, whose voice they utter, supplies the rest.

Of all the talents proper for raising man to a state of empire and command, a superiority of wit and knowledge is not the most effectual; 'tis the art of moving men as one pleases; an art that is acquired principally by a person's seeming to be moved, and penetrated with those very sentiments he intends to inspire. 'Tis the art of being like CATILINE, cujuslibet rei simulator, which you may call, if you please, the art of being a complete actor. Those amongst the Eng-

Vel. I. D lift,

lish, that are best acquainted with the history of their own country, do not mention the name of Oliver Cromwell with the fame admiration, as the generality of that nation; they are far from allowing him that extensive, penetrating, and fuperior genius, with which fo many are pleafed to honour him. They reduce therefore his whole merit to his bravery, as a foldier; and to a peculiar talent of feeming penetrated with those fentiments which he had a mind to feign, and appearing moved with those passions he defired to inspire, as if he had really felt them himself. loe, they fay, instructed him occasionally, what persons he was to prevail upon in order to make his project succeed, and in what manner it was proper to attack them; just as one would tutor a woman that is to be employed in acting fome character of importance. Oliver spoke to them afterwards in fo pathetic a manner, as to bring them over to his party. Europe, furprised to fee him convert to his advantage an event, which, it was thought, would have terminated in his ruin, did him the honor of complimenting him upon this fuccess, with feveral virtues which he was a real stranger to; and, by this means, his reputation was established. Something like this has been observed of one of the greatest ministers, which France had in the last century, by some of his cotemporaries.

When we happen to be at an affembly, where feveral gamesters are seated round different tables, what secret instinct is it, that induces ney, the their manner of playing be not so judicious, perhaps, as that at other tables? What engaging attraction draws us back to them, after having been led by our curiosity to see the sport of fortune in the neighbouring scenes? 'Tis their emotion and warmth that engages us, and those who play deepest affect us most, because they are most affected themselves.

In fine, 'tis eafy to conceive how the imitations of painting and poetry are capable of moving us, when we reflect, that a shell, a slower, a medal, whereon time has scarce left the traces of letters or sigures, are capable of raising the most ardent and importunate passions; the curiosity of seeing them, and the desire of possessing them. Nothing is more common than to see a violent passion raised by the most trisling object; and nothing is surprizing in our passions but a long continuance.

CHAP. V.

That the reason of Plato's excluding poets from his republic, was the too great impression their imitations make upon man.

HE impressions which imitations in certain cases make upon man, appear so strong, and consequently so dangerous to Plato, as to occasion

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casion the resolution he takes of tolerating no poetic imitation, or what is properly called poetry, in that imaginary republic, whose laws and government he fettles with fo much pleasure. He is apprehensive lest paintings and poetic imitations should have too great an effect over the imaginations of his favourite people, whom he formed to himself of as lively a conception, and of as exquisite a sensibility, as his countrymen the Greeks. The poets, fays Plato a, do not favour us with the description of the internal tranquillity of a wife man, who preserves a constant equality of mind; an equality, proof against all pain and pleasure. They never make use of their talent of fiction, to give us the picture of a man who bears the loss of an only son with constancy and resolution. They never bring upon the stage such personages as know bow to silence their passions, in order to listen to the voice of reason. The poets here are in the

Το δε ωρός τὰς ἀναμνήσεις τε το ωαθες κ) ωρός οδυρμες ἄγον, κ) ἀπλής ως ἔχων αὐτῶν, ἄρ ἐκ ἀλόγις όν τε Φήσομεν εἶναι κ) ἀργον, κ) δειλίας Φίλον ; Φήσομεν μὲν ἐν. οὐκῶν τὸ μὲν ωολλην μίμησιν κ) ωοικίλην ἔχει τὸ ἀγανακθικόν. τὸ δε Φρόνιμον κ) ήσύχιον κ) ἤθος, ωα-ραπλήσιον δν ἀεὶ αὐτὸ αὐτῷ, ἔτε ράδιον μιμήσασθαι, ἔτε μιμέμενον, εὐπεθες καθαμαθεῖν, ἄλλως τε κ) ωανηγύρει, κ) ωανθοδαποῖς ἀνθρώποις εἰς θέαθρα ξυλλιγομένοις — Ο δη μιμηθικός ωοιηθης δήλον ὅτι ἐωρὸς τὸ τοιᾶτον τῆς ψυχῆς πεφυκέ γε' κ) ή σοφία αὐτᾶ τέτω ἀρέσκειν ωέπηγεν, εἰ μέλλει εὐδοκιμήσειν ἐν τοῖς ωολλοῖς · ἀλλὰ ωρὸς τὸ ἀγανακθικόν τε κ) ωοικίλον ήθος, διὰ τὸ εὐμίμηθον εἶναι· — ταυτὸν κ) τὸν μιμηθικὸν ωοιητὴν Φήσομεν κακὴν ωολίθειαν ἰδία ἐκάς ε τῆ ψυχῆ ἐμωσιεῖν, τῷ ἀνοήτω αὐτῆς χαριζόμενον. Plato de Repub. lib. 10.

right; for a Stoic would certainly make a very wretched figure in a tragedy. The poets, fays the same philosopher, who have a mind to move us, present us with quite different objects; they introduce into their poems, men abandoned to violent desires, men, made a prey to all the tumultuary impulses of their passions; or struggling with their impetuous agitations. In fact, poets have fo ftrong a persuasion, that it is the emotion of the actor, which makes us take a delight in hearing him fpeak, that as foon as the fate of those personages is decided, whether to be happy or miserable, they are allowed to appear no longer upon the stage. Now, according to Plato, the habit of yielding to those passions, even those artificial ones produced by poetry, weakens the spiritual empire of the foul, and disposes us to let our selves be swayed by the irregular motions of our appetites. This philosopher, it seems, would fain establish a confusion of order in the actions of man, which, purfuant to his way of thinking, ought to be directed by the understanding, and not governed by the appetites of the fensitive foul.

Plato a has also another objection against poets, which is, their acting so often the parts of those

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Τὰ δ΄ ἀνελεύθερα μη τε τοιείν, μήτε δεινώς είναι μιμήσασθαι, μηδ΄ ἄλλο μηδεν των αἰσχεών. Ίνα μη έκ της μιμήσεως, τῶ είναι ἀπολαύσωσιν. ἢ ἐκ ἤσθησαι ὅτι ἀι μιμ΄σεις ἐἀν ἐκ νέων τόξεω διατελέσωσιν, ἐις ἔθη τε κὰ Φύσιν καθίς ανθαι κὰ καθὰ σῶμα, κὰ Φως τὰς, κὰ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν. Plato de Repub. 1. 3.

vicious men, whose sentiments they have a mind to express, whereby, he says, they contract at length those corrupt manners which they represent daily in their imitations. There is great reason to fear, that their minds will be insected by entertaining constantly those ideas, which are the occupation of men of abandoned principles. Frequent imitation, says Quintilian a, talking of comedians, communicates itself, at length, to their morals.

Plato b corroborates with his own experience, the remarks above-mentioned upon the pernicious effects of poetry. After acknowledging that he has been frequently bewitched with its charms, he compares the uneafiness he feels, in laying aside Homer, to the pain of a lover, forced by the imperious behaviour of his mistress to part with her, after a long and dubious struggle with his passion. Where 'tis to be observed, that he calls Homer the poet by preference, and the greatest of all inventers. If Plato therefore excludes poets from his republic, 'tis obvious that his reasons are the same as those which induce preachers to de-

^{*} Frequens imitatio transt in mores. QUINT. Inst. Orat, Ορως δὶ εἰρήσθω ὅτι ἡμεῖς γε, εἰ τικα ἔχοι λόγον εἰπεῖν ἡ ωρὸς ἡδονὴν ωοιηἰκὴ κὴ ἡ μίμησις, ὡς χρη ἀὐτὴν εἶναι ἐν ωόλει εὐνομεμένη, ἄσμενοι ἀν καλαδεχοίμεθα, ὡς ξύνισμέν γε ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς κηλυμένοις ἡπ ἀὐλῆς.—Εἰ δὲ γε μὴ, ὡ Φίλε ἐταῖςε, ὡσπερ οί ωστέ ων ἐρασΒένὶες, ἐὰν ἡγήσωνθαι μὴ ὡΦέλιμον εἶναι τὸν ἔχωθα, βία μὲν, ὁμως δὲ ἀπενχοθαι, κὴ ἡμεῖς οὐτω, διὰ τὸν ἐγεγονότα μὲν ἔχωθα τῆς τοιαὐτη φειήσεως, ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν καλῶν ωολίθειῶν προφῆς, εὖνοι μὲν ἐσόμεθα, Φανῆναι ἀὐτῆν ὡς βελτίς ην κὰ ἀληθες άτην. Plato de Repub. l. 10.

claim against the stage, or which occasioned the exile of those great men from Athens, who had distinguished themselves by their popularity.

These are the motives, which induced this philosopher to proscribe that part of the poetic art, which confifts in painting and imitating; for he is willing to admit into his republic the part of the faid art, which is frequently called versification, and which we shall distinguish often in the course of these reflections by the name of the mechanic part of poetry. He even commends this latter part, inasmuch as it contributes to render the discourse more pompous, and more agreeable to the ear, by introducing therein numbers and harmony, things much more pleasing than the cadence of profe. According to him the praises of the gods and heroes thrown into metre, become much agreabler to the ear, and easier to the memory. His design is therefore to retain in his republic fuch parts only of each art, as are almost incapable of being pernicious, whilst he explodes those which he apprehends may prove dangerous to fociety. Thus he banishes from his commonwealth those measures of ancient music, whose soft and effeminate airs were become suspicious to him; and retains such as feem not to threaten any kind of ill consequence.

We might answer Plato, that a necessary, or useful art, ought not to be excluded from society, because of its being liable to be perverted to bad purposes by those that are acquainted with

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its pernicious uses. None but superstuous and dangerous arts ought to be proscribed by governments; and as for those that are useful in their nature, 'tis sufficient that proper care be taken to preserve them from being abused. Plato does not forbid the planting of vines on the little hills of his republic, notwithstanding the abuse of wine is frequently the cause of great disorders; and the allurements of that liquor induce people oftentimes to drink to excess.

The good uses that several poets have in all ages made of the invention and imitations of poetry, fufficiently evince, that it is far from being an art unufeful to fociety. As it is naturally as proper for the description of those actions which are capable of inspiring men with virtuous thoughts, as of those which may contribute to strengthen their vicious inclinations; the whole business therefore is to apply it to good purposes. The description of virtuous actions warms the foul, elevates it in some measure above itself. and excites the most laudable passions within us, fuch as the love of our country, and the thirst of glory. The habit of those passions enables us to make feveral efforts of courage and virtue, which reason alone could never induce us to attempt. In fact, the good of fociety calls upon us frequently for fervices of fo very difficult a nature, that it is very happy for us, if we can bring in the paffions as auxiliaries, to enable us to discharge our duties. Besides, a good poet knows how to range his descriptions of the vices and passions, so as to render wisdom and virtue still more amiable to his readers. But we have dwelt long enough upon this subject, especially as there is no danger (as we shall surther observe hereaster) of the French poetry's gaining such an ascendant over the minds of men, as that whereof Plato so much dreaded the ill consequences; not to mention that we are neither of so lively, nor of so sensible a disposition as the Athenians.

But Plato raises here another objection against the merit of poetry, which is, that poets are only imitators and copiers of the works and productions of other artists. The poet a, who entertains us with the description of a temple, according to this philosopher, is no more than a copier of the architect that built it. Here I join issue with him, and in fact I should chuse to be the architect of St. Peter's church at Rome, rather than the poet that had made an elegant description of it. I grant also, that there is a greater merit in finding out the proportions which render a ship a prime sailor, than in describing the rapidity of its course through the wide ocean. But it also happens frequently, that there is less merit in being the maker of some things than the imitator. Is it not a greater honor, for instance, to have described an old book,

[•] Τῦτο (ἦ δ' ος) ἔμοιγε δοχεῖ μεῖς ιώτατος αν σεςοσαγος εὐεσθαι μιμητης ἢ ἐχεῖνοι δημιθργοί. Εἶεν (ἦν δ' ἐγω) τὸν τὰ τείτα ἀςα γενήματος ἀπὸ της Φύσεως, μιμητην χαλεῖς; στάνυ μὲν ἔν, ἔφη · ταῦτ ἄςα
ἔται Ἡ ὁ τεαγωδιοποιός · εἶπερ μιμηθής ἐςαι, τρίζος τὶς ἀπὸ βασιλέως Ἡ τῆς ἀληθείας σεφυχώς Ἡ σάντες οἱ ἄλλοι μιμηθαί. III.
Plato de Repub. 1. 10.

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as Boileau has done in the following lines, than to have either bound or printed it?

A ces mots il saisit un gros Infortiat.

Gross des visions d'Accurse & d'Alciat,

Inutile ramas de Gotbique ecriture.

Dont quatre ais mal unis formoient la couverture

Entourée à demi d'un vieil parchemin noir,

Qu pendoit à trois clous un reste de sermoir.

Boileau Lutrin. cant. 6.

With this he Fox's book of martyrs chose,
Four ill-join'd boards the coverture compose,
Burrow'd by worms, and edg'd with iron round,
With old black sheep-skin only half-way bound;
No silken ties it had, but at each hasp
Hung by three nails a remnant of a class.

Here the copy excels the original. Besides, what numbers of things are imitated by poets, that are not the handy-work of man, such as thunder, and other meteors, and in short all nature, that wonderful production of the Creator? But this discourse might soon be swelled to a philosophical discussion, which would lead us too far; let us conclude therefore, with observing, that the society, which would object against communicating with those, whose arts might be perverted to bad uses, would soon become the seat of stupidity and dulness.

The man take the configuration and the man and the the

very to the state of their parties

CHAP. VI.

Of the nature of those subjects which painters and poets treat of. That they cannot chuse for imitation too engaging a subject.

CINCE the principal charm of poetry and painting, even the very power of moving and pleafing, proceeds from the imitations of objects capable of engaging us; the greatest imprudence a poet or painter can commit, is to chuse for a principal object of imitation, such things as we should look upon with an eye of indifference in nature; or to employ their art in the description of fuch actions, as would draw only a midling attention, were we really to behold them. How is it possible for us to be touched with the copy of an original, when the original itself is incapable of moving us? How shall our attention be engaged by a picture representing a peasant driving a conple of beafts along the highway, if the very action which this picture imitates, has no power of affecting us? A tale in verse, describing an adventure, which we have feen unconcernedly, will be much less able to give us any concern. The imitation operates always with less force, as Quintilian observes a, than the object imitated. The imitation

therefore

Quicquid alteri fimtle eft, neceffe eft minus fit eo, quod imi-

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS on

therefore is incapable of moving us, when the object imitated can have no effect upon us. The subjects which the Teniers, Wowermans, and other painters of the same rank have chosen for imitation, would have very little engaged our attention. There is nothing in the action of a country feaft, or in the amusements of a parcel of foldiers in a guardhouse, that is capable of moving us. The imitation therefore of those objects, may possibly amuse us some few moments, may even draw from us an applause of the artist's abilities in imitating, but can never raise any emotion or concern. We commend the painter's art in copying nature fo well, but we disapprove of his choice of objects that have fo little in them to engage us.

The finest landskip, were it even Titian's or Caraccio's, does not affect us more, than the prospect of a frightful or agreable spot of land; there is nothing in fuch a picture that can be called really entertaining, and, as it strikes us but little, fo as little it engages us. The most knowing painters have been fo thoroughly convinced of this truth, that it is very rare to find any mere landskips of theirs without an intermixture of figures. They have therefore thought proper to people them, as it were, by introducing into their pieces a subject composed of feveral personages, whereof the action might be capable of moving, and confequently of engaging us. 'Tis thus that Poussin, Rubens, and several other great masters, have employed their art. They therefore

They are not fatisfied with giving a place in their landskips to the picture of a man going along the high road, or of a woman carrying fruit to market; they commonly present us with figures that think, in order to make us think; they paint men hurried with passions, to the end that ours may be also raised, and our attention fixed by this very agitation: In fact, the figures of those pieces are much more talked of than the trees or terraffes. The famous landskip, so often drawn by Poussin, and which is commonly called the Arcadia, would not have been so highly esteemed, had

it not been embellished with figures.

The fame of those blissful regions is universally known, which were fancied to have been once inhabited by the happiest race of men that ever the earth produced; men engaged in an uninterrupted feries of pleasures, and strangers to all disquiets or cares, except such as are attributed in romances to those chimerical shepherds, whose situation is represented to us as an object worthy of our de-The picture abovementioned exhibits a landskip of that delightful country: In the middle thereof you fee the monument of a young maid fnatched away in the flower of her age; which appears from her statue lying on the tomb, after the manner of the antients. The sepulchral inscription contains those few latin words, Et in Arcadia ego: And I was once an inbabitant of Arcadia. But this short inscription draws the most serious reflections from two youths and two young virgins decked with garlands.

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lands, who feem to be ftruck with their having thus accidentally met with fo melancholy a fcene. in a place where one might naturally suppose they had not been in pursuit of an object of forrow. One of them points with his finger to the inscription, to make the rest observe it, whilst the remains of an expiring joy may yet be difcerned through the gloominess of grief which begins to diffuse itself over their countenances. Here you imagine yourself listening to the reflections of those youthful persons upon death, which spares neither age nor beauty, and against the attacks of which the most happy climates can afford no fanctuary. Your fancy now fuggests to you, the affecting speeches they are going to make to each other upon recovering from their first surprize, which you will naturally apply to yourfelf, and to those whom you have a concern for.

What has been faid with regard to painting, is equally applicable to poetry; fince the imitations which the latter makes of nature, affect us only in proportion to the impression made by the thing imitated. The best versified tale imaginable, the subject whereof hath nothing in its nature ridiculous, will never be capable of exciting laughter. A fatire, which does not set in a clear light some truth, whereof I had already a consused idea, nor contains none of those maxims, whose conciseness of expression, and sublimity of thought, render them worthy of being dignissed as proverbs; such a satire perhaps may be commended as a well-written piece, but makes no impression, nor leaves

no defire of a fecond perufal in the mind of the reader. An epigram without any vivacity of thought, or on fuch a subject as would not bear listening to with pleasure in prose, let the versification and rhyme be ever so well finished, will never six itself in your memory. A dramatic poet, whose personages appear in characters of so little concernment, as I should not be uneasy to see my most intimate acquaintances acting those very characters in real life; is very far from engaging me in favor of his personages. Tis impossible for the copy to affect me, if I cannot be touched with the original.

CHAP. VII.

That we are more affected with tragedy than comedy, because of the nature of those subjects, which tragedy treats of.

Hosoever reflects that tragedy has a much stronger power of affecting a great part of mankind, than comedy, will easily conclude from thence, that their imitations are no further interesting, than in proportion to the greater or lesser impression, which the object imitated would have made upon us. Now it is certain, that men in general are not so much moved with the theatrical action during the representation of a comedy, as during

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during that of a tragedy. Those whose chief amuses ments consist in dramatic poetry, talk more frequently, and with a greater warmth of the tragedies, than of the comedies they have seen represented; and have generally a greater number of verses by heart from Corneille and Racine's pieces, than from those of Moliere. In fine, we are readier to excuse a mediocrity in the tragic than in the comic stile, tho' the latter seems not to have the same command over our attention, as the first.

Plus oneris, quanto veniæ minus.

Hor. l. 2. ep. 1.

The comic then was thought the easier way,

Because 'tis common humor makes the play;

Yet 'tis the hardest, for the faults appear

So monstrous and the critics so severe,

That e'en their greatest mercy cannot spare.

CREECH.

Those, whose labors are designed for the stage, talk all in the same strain, and unanimously agree, that there is not so much danger in giving the public a rendezvous to divert them with weeping, as to amuse them with laughing.

One would imagine, nevertheless, that comedy ought to draw men's attentions more than tragedy. A comic poet does not exhibit to the specta-

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tors heroic characters, or fuch as they have no knowledge of but from some vague ideas formed from the relation of historians: they do not entertain the pit with conspiracies against the state, with oracles and other marvellous events, and fuch as the greatest part of the spectators, who have never had any share in the like adventures. would not be able to tell whether the circumstances and confequences thereof are fet forth with any refemblance of truth. On the contrary, the comic poet entertains us with the picture of our friends, and of those with whom we have a constant intercourse and familiarity. The theatre, according to Plato a, subsists, as it were, intirely by the errors and foibles which are daily incident to men, by reason of their not being sufficiently acquainted with themselves. Some imagine themfelves more powerful than they really are, some more knowing, and others, in fine, more amiable.

The tragic poet exposes the inconveniences arifing, from the want of self-knowledge in sove-vereigns and other independent persons, the consequences of whose vindictive temper make generally a great noise, whose resentments are naturally violent, and whose passions proper for the stage are capable of being the springs of the greatest events. The comic poet exhibits the consequences of self-ignorance among the common people, whose resentments are subordinate to the laws, and whose passions, proper for the scenes, are productive only of domestic broils and ordinary adventures.

* In Phil. p. 48.

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The comic poet entertains us therefore with the adventures of our equals, and prefents us with the portraits of originals, that are constantly before us. He makes even the pit, if the expression be allowed me, mount upon the stage. Man therefore, who is naturally fond of any discovery he can make of his neighbour's foibles, and defirous of all knowledge that can intitle him to leffen his esteem of others, ought naturally to find his account better with Thalia than with Melpomene; especially as Thalia is much more fertile than Melpomene of leffons for private people's instruc-Tho' comedy may not perhaps correct all the failings it exposes, yet it teaches us at least how to live with fuch as are fubject to those failings, and how to conform so in company, as to avoid the rough stiffness that provokes them, or the mean compliance that flatters them. Tragedy, on the contrary, represents heroes, with whom our fituation forbids us to attempt any refemblance, and whose lessons and examples are drawn from events fo diffimilar to those that we are commonly exposed to, that the applications, which we might be willing to make thereof, would be extremely vague and imperfect.

But comedy, according to the definition of Aristotle a, is the imitation of the ridicule of mankind: and tragedy, pursuant to the received sig-

² Η δὶ κωμωδία ἐςτν, ώσπες εἶπομεν, μίμησις Φαυλοτέςων μές, ἐ μέντοι κατά πάσαν κακίαν, ἀλλά τῦ ἀισχοῦ ἐςτι τὸ γελότον μόςτον. Arist. poet. cap. 5.

nification of the word b, is the imitation of the life and conversation of heroes, or of men subject, from the elevation of their rank, to the greatest transport of passion. It is the imitation of the crimes and misfortunes of great men; as likewife of the fublimest virtues of which they are capable. The tragic poet exhibits men, who are captives to the most extravagant passions, and the most tumultuous agitations. He shews us a fort of unjust, but all-powerful Deities, who demand a young innocent princess to be facrificed at the foot of their altars. He fets before us the great Pompey, the conqueror of nations, and the terror of the eaftern monarchs, massacred by his vilest slaves. 'Tis true we never find our friend in any of the tragic personages; but their passions are more impetuous, and as the laws are but a feeble barrier to those passions, they are attended with much greater consequences, than the passions of comic characters. Thus the terror and pity, which the picture of tragical events excites in our fouls, engages us much more than all the laughter and contempt excited by the feveral incidents of comedies.

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CHAP. VIII.

Of the different kinds of poetry, and their character.

HE fame reasoning will hold good in all kinds of poetry, each of which moves us, in proportion as the object, which it is defigned to paint and imitate, is capable of affecting us. 'Tis for this reason, that the elegiac and bucolic kinds are much more engaging than didactic pieces. Thus the verses which Tibullus sighed, and love whispered to him, to make use of the expression of the author of the art of poetry a, give us an infinite pleasure as often as we read them. Ovid charms us in those elegies, in which he has not substituted his own wit instead of the language of nature. Virgil's eclogues are fo pleafing as never to caufe, even after a repeated reading, any diffelish or satiety. They continue to be agreable, even when they have nothing new to entertain us with, and when the memory out-runs the eye in the reading of them. Both these kinds of poetry are descriptive of men who are fenfibly moved, and whose pains or pleafures would have deeply affected us, were they to entertain us with the recital thereof themselves.

Those epigrams, whose merit consists in a pun, or in a witty allusion, please us only while they are new. 'Tis the first surprise of those touches that strikes us,

* Boileau.

and once we retain the fense, the point is blunted. But fuch epigrams as paint objects capable of making us relent, or of engaging in any other manner our attention, make always an impression upon The reading of them is frequently repeated, and a great many retain them without having ever thought of committing them to memory. Not to mention any modern poets, the epigrams of Martial, which are most generally known, are not those wherein he has quibbled on words, but where he has painted fome object capable of giving us any great concern. Of that kind is his epigram upon Arria the wife of Petus.

Men of the best sense, who have wrote dogmatic poems, and rendered verse subservient to the utility of their lessons, have conducted themselves pursuant to the 'principle now expounded. In order to keep the attention of the reader steady, they have interspersed their verses with images descriptive of affecting objects; for those objects, that are only proper for fatisfying our curiofity, do not engage us near fo much as fuch as are capable of moving our passions. Thus, if the expression be indulged me, a correspondence with the mind is more difficult to keep up, than one with the heart,

and those who triain have from one Company was for the cross that Jon

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CHAP. IX.

Of the manner of rendering dogmatic subjects engaging.

THEN Virgil composed his Georgics. which is a dogmatic poem, the title whereof promifes us inftructions on agriculture, and on the occupations of a country life, he took particular care to flock it with imitations drawn from fuch objects, as would have engaged our attention in nature. Virgil is not even fatisfied with those images, strewed with an infinite dexterity of art throughout his whole work. He has given place in one of those books to a differtation occafioned by the presages of the fun, where he treats with all the beauty of invention, of the murder of Julius Cæfar, and of the commencement of the reign of Augustus. He could not have entertained the Romans with a more engaging subject. He inferts in another book, the furprifing fable of Arifteus, with a description of the effects of love. In another he entertains us with the picture of a rural life, fo as to form a most pleasing landkskip diversified with the most agreable figures. In fine, he imbellishes this work with the tragical adventure of Orpheus and Euridyce, an adventure capable of drawing tears from those who might have been the real spectators of it. 'Tis so far true, that 'tis those images which occasion so much pleasure in the

the reading of the Georgics, that our attention grows remiss upon coming to the precepts which the title promises. Even admitting that the object, which a didactic poem presents us with, be curious enough to bear reading once through with pleasure, yet we could never read it over again with so much satisfaction as we should an eclogue. The mind has no repetition of pleasure in learning twice the same thing; but the heart has its pleasure repeated in feeling twice the same emotion. The pleasure of learning is exhausted by

the pleasure of knowing.

Those dogmatic poems, which the authors have neglected to imbellish with a frequent repetition of pathetic descriptions, are very little read by the generality of mankind. Let the merit of those poems be ever so great, the reading of them notwithstanding is looked upon, not as an amusement, but as a ferious occupation. They are generally the least liked, and very few readers are able to repeat any other verses from them, but such as contain pictures refembling those with which Virgil is commended for enriching his Georgics. Every body feems to admire the genius and poetic fire of Lucretius, the energy of his expreffions, the bold manner wherewith he paints fuch objects as a poet's pencil does not feem to be made for; in fine, his dexterity of throwing things into verse, which even Virgil himself would have despaired of being able to express in the language of the Gods: Nevertheless this very Lucretius is much more admired than read. There

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is more real utility to be extracted from his poem de natura rerum, tho' it be fo full of bad reasonings, than from Virgil's Æneid: yet, the latter is read fo as to become familiar to all the world, whilft very few make Lucretius their favorite author. His is a work that is never read but with a professed design; whereas the Æneid is one of those books, whereon you are led by a fecret charm to lay your hand, when willing to amuse yourself an hour or two agreably. Let us but compare the number of the translations of Lucretius, to that of the versions of Virgil, into all the polite languages, and we shall find four translations of Virgil's Æneid for one of the poem de natura rerum. Men will be always fonder of books that move them, than of those that instruct them. As heaviness is more burthensome and disagreable to them than ignorance, they prefer therefore the pleasure of being moved, to that of being instructed.

CHAP. X.

Objection drawn from pictures, to prove that the art of imitation is more engaging than the very subject of imitation.

T may be here objected, that some pictures, wherein we only fee the imitation of different objects, which would have no way affected us, had

had we seen them in their real nature, engage notwithstanding our attention a long time. We take much more notice of fruits and animals represented in a picture, than we should of the reality of those very objects. The copy here en-

gages us more than the original.

To this I reply, that when we contemplate curiously any pictures of this kind, our principal attention is not fixt on the object imitated, but upon the art of the imitator. 'Tis not fo much the object, as the artist's abilities, that draws our curiofity; we bestow no more attention on the object imitated in the picture, than we should on that same object in real nature. This kind of pictures does not engage our curiofity half fo long as those, wherein the merit of the subject is joined with that of the execution. No body stands as long gazing at a basket of flowers done by Baptift, or at a country feaft done by Teniers, as he would on one of Pouffin's feven facraments, or fome other historical composition executed with as much ability and art, as is displayed by Baptist and Teniers in theirs. An historical piece drawn with as much dexterity, as a guard-house by Teniers, would engage our attention much more than the guard-house.

Here we are always to suppose, as it is reasonable we should, that the painter's art has been equally successful in both; for it is not sufficient that the pictures be drawn by the same hand. For instance, we behold with more pleasure one of Tenier's country feasts, than one of his historical pieces;

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but this is no argument at all against us. Every body knows that Teniers miscarried always in his serious compositions, as he generally succeeded in

his grotefoue ones.

Thus, by distinguishing the attention which is given to the art, from that which is given to the object imitated, the truth of my proposition will appear manifest; that the imitation never makes a greater impression on us, than the object imitated could have made. This is even true in pictures, that are only valuable for the merit of the execution.

The art of painting is fo extremely delicate and attacks us by means of a sense, which has so great an empire over our foul, that a picture may be rendered agreable by the very charms of the execution, independent of the object which it represents: but I have already observed, that our attention and esteem are fixt then upon the art of the imitator, who knows how to please, even without moving us. We admire the pencil that has been fo capable of counterfeiting nature. We inquire how it was possible for an artist to deceive our eyes to that degree, as to make us take colors laid on a furface for real fruit. A painter, therefore, may pass for a great artist, considered as an elegant defigner, or as fo fkilled in colors as to rival nature, though he does not even know how to make use of his talents in the representation of affecting objects, or to give his pictures that spirit and refemblance of life that are conspicuous in those of Raphael and Poussin. The pictures of the Lombard

Lombard school are admired, though the painters thereof have frequently confined themselves to the flattering of the eyes, with the richness and exactness of their colors, without reflecting, perhaps, that their art was capable of moving us: but their most zealous sticklers agree, that there is yet one great beauty wanting in the pictures of this school; and that those of Titian, for instance, would be infinitely more valuable, if he had pitched upon affecting subjects, and if he had joined more frequently the talents of his own school with those of the Roman. The picture of this great painter, which represents Peter Martyr, a Dominican friar, massacred by the Vaudois, is not perbaps the most valuable of his pieces for the richness of local colors, notwithstanding its being so admirable, even in this respect; and yet Cavalier Ridolfi, the historian of the painters of the school of Venice, acknowledges that this, of all his pieces, is the most generally known, and the most universally applauded. The reason thereof is, because the action of this picture is more engaging, and Titian has treated it with a greater refemblance of truth, and a more elaborate expression of the passions, than any of his other pieces.

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ration to a poet incapable of difficultifling hims.

CHAP. XI.

That the beauties of execution only cannot render a poem a finished piece, though they can a picture.

HOSE who have no other merit but that of excelling in verification, and are incapable of painting any object proper to move us; or who, according to the phrase of Horace, commit nothing but barmonious nonsense to paper, are not equally intitled to be stiled poets, as the others above-mentioned are to be painters. The public has never fet any value upon the works of a poet, who has only the talent of excelling in the mechanic part of his art. It would be wrong neverthelefs, to charge the public with feverity towards poets, and with indulgence to painters. There is a much greater difficulty in being skilled in colors, and an elegance of drawing, than in knowing how to range words and to rhime exactly. Besides, there is no imitation of nature in the compositions of a meer versifier; or, at least, as I shall explain more at large in the course of this work, it is very difficult for French verses to imitate, in the pronouncing of them, the found which the fense of those verses describe, so as to give reputation to a poet incapable of distinguishing himfelf in any other manner. Rhime is no imitation of any beauty in nature; but, as I have already observed, observed, there is a very valuable imitation of the beauties of nature in the pieces of those painters, who understand nothing more than the article of coloring. In these we see an imitation of human sless, and can discern in their landskips the different effects of light, and the natural color of objects.

Whosoever therefore is once convinced that the principal merit of poems and paintings consists in the representation of such objects, as are capable of moving and engaging us, were we to be really spectators of them, will easily conceive of what importance the choice of the subject is to painters and poets; of such importance, that they cannot chuse them of too interesting and engaging a nature.

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Mec facundia deseret bunc, nec lucidus ordo.

Hor. de Arte Poetica.

Ye writers try the vigour of your muse,

And what her strength will hear, and what

refuse,

And after that an equal subject choose.

And after that an equal subject choose;

For he that does this well, and chooses right,

His method will be clear, his words he sit.

the principal events of the biflory of a particular

people, has a much greater pervet of

CREECH.

CHAP. XII.

That a work has a twofold manner of engaging us; the one in a general fense, as men; and the other in a particular fense, as individuals.

Subject may interest us in two different manners. In the first place, it may be interesting of its own nature, because of the circumftances being fuch as ought naturally to move mankind in general. Secondly, it may be interesting with regard to some particular persons only; that is, there may be a subject which is only capable of engaging a very middling attention in the generality of mankind, and yet may be extreamly affecting with respect to particular people. For example, a portrait is a piece which is looked on with very great indifference by those who have no knowledge of the person it represents; but this very portrait is of great value to fuch as have any love for the original. A copy of verses filled with sentiments agreable to our own ideas, and descriptive of fuch a fituation as that in which we are at prefent, or have been formerly, would not fail of being extremely acceptable to us. A fubject containing the principal events of the history of a particular people, has a much greater power of engaging their attention, than that of any other nation. The

The subject of the Æneid was much more interesting, with respect to the Romans, than it is to The fubject of the poem of the maid of Orleans is more capable of engaging us than the Italians. But it is unnecessary to exemplify any longer this relative interest, peculiar to certain people and times, especially as it is an easy matter for painters and poets to discern, whether the subjects they intend to treat of, are remarkably engaging, with respect to those persons, before whom

they propose to exhibit their productions.

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I shall be therefore satisfied with making two reflections on this article. The first is, that it is exceeding difficult for a poem of any extent, unaffifted by the pathetic of declamation, or by the farce and apparatus of the stage, to have any tolerable degree of success, unless it be composed on a subject, wherein the two interests are united; that is, on a subject capable of touching all mankind, and of being particularly agreable to the author's countrymen, by reason of its treating of those matters, wherein they are chiefly concerned. Poems are not read for instruction, but amusement; and when they have no charms capable of engaging us, they are generally laid afide. Now it is almost imposfible for a poet to be fufficiently fertile in beauties, and to be able to divertify them likewife merely, as it were, by strength of genius, with a variety requifite for commanding our attention, during the reading of an epic poem. Tis too hazardous to attempt to excite, and fatisfy COCH

tisfy our curiofity both together. 'Tis too bold an undertaking, to pretend to make us fall in love with personages intirely indifferent to us, so as to be moved with all their different scenes of fuccess and adversity. The poet acts very right in availing himself of all the inclinations and passions, that we are already subject to; especially of those which belong to us properly as inhabitants of a particular place, or upon fome other confideration. A poet, that would make Henry the IVth the hero of an epic poem, would find our inclinations already engaged in favor of his fubject: perhaps his art would have been uselesty exhausted, before he could have rendered us as well affected to an antient hero, or to a strange prince, as we are already attached to the memory of the greatest of our monarchs.

The relative or particular interest excites as much our curiosity, or at least inclines us, as much as the general interest, to relent, as well as to become attached to an object. The imitation of things wherein we are interested, either as inhabitants of a particular country, or addicted to a certain party, has a prodigious effect upon us. How many party writings are indebted for their same to the particular interest and protection of those who are attached to the cause, which they undertake to defend? True it is, that the public forgets quickly those books, that have no other merit but what they borrow of particular conjunctures; wherefore a book must have an intrinsic value to support its reputation. But

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upon a supposition of its having this intrinfic worth, and this merit of pleafing mankind, the particular interest contributes towards rendering it fooner known to the public. A good book, supported by this interest, makes its way with greater expedition and fuccess into the world. Besides, there are relative interests of a long continuance, that are capable of reconciling the attention of a great number of people to a particular work for many fuccessions of ages. Such is the interest of a nation in a poem, which relates the principal events of its history, and defcribes its towns, rivers, and edifices that are constantly present to its fight. This particular interest would have crowned Chapelain's maid of Orleans with fuccefs, had the poem been any thing tolerable.

True it is, that all Europe reads Virgil's Æneid to this very day with pleasure, tho' the objects described in this poem are no longer prefent to our fight; and notwithstanding we are not equally interested in the foundation of the Roman empire as the cotemporaries of Virgil, the chief of whom looked upon themselves as the descendants of those heroes whom he fung. The feafts, the combats and places mentioned by him, are known to a great many of his readers, only by what he relates of them himself. Nevertheless the Æneid, that celebrated piece of the most accomplished poet that ever wrote, has still several resources left, to support its credit. Tho' this poem moves us at present only

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VOL. I.

inasmuch as we are men, yet it still has a store of charms sufficient to engage us. But it would be presumption in any other poet, especially were he to write in French, to slatter himself with the hopes of a success equal to that of the Æneid, that is, of moving without any interest particularly relative to the reader. I shall endeavour to explain this point more at large in the course of this work.

. My fecond reflection shall be on the injustice and temerity of fuch, as are fo ready to tax with untruth, what the antients mention relating to the prodigious fuccess of some particular works; a temerity which proceeds from their not attending properly to the manner, wherein those works interested their admirers. For example, those who are furprized that Cæfar should have been disordered upon the hearing of Cicero's oration for Ligarius, and that the Dictator should have forgot himself fo far as to let his papers drop from his hands through an involuntary motion; who pretend likewife, that after having perused this oration, they are at a loss to find out the passage capable of making fo lively an impression upon such a man as ·Cæfar; those, I say, talk like grammarians, whose studies have never been carried further than the tongue of man, without having ever attained to the knowledge of the feveral motions of his heart. Were they to put themselves in Cæsar's place, they would be at no fuch loss to discover this passage. They would foon be fensible how the Pharsalian conqueror, who had embraced even in the field of

battle his vanquished enemy with all the tenderness of a fellow citizen, could have been moved by the picture of this event drawn by Cicero, infomuch as to forget his being feated on the tribunal.

Let us return now to the general interest, and to those subjects which derive from thence so great a power of moving mankind. I have already observed, that painters and poets ought never to undertake any other subjects. These artifts, I allow, are capable of inriching their fubjects, that is, they can render fuch subjects interesting, as have nothing engaging in their nature: nevertheless there are several inconveniences which will naturally arise from treating of fubjects which draw all their pathetic from the invention of the artift. A painter, but more particularly a poet, that treats of an uninteresting fubject, has only two ways left of furmounting its sterility, and of throwing the pathetic into an indifferent action. Either he must embellish this action by episodes, or he must change its principal circumstances. If the poet should chuse the former, the reader's interesting himself in those episodes, would only contribute to expose the frigidity of the principal action, and draw a reproach upon him for not having answered the title of his performance. If he changes the principal circumstances of the action, which we must suppose to be some event universally known, his poem becomes void of probability. A fact cannot appear probable to us, after having F 2 been

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been informed of the contrary by credible witnesses; as we shall more fully explain, when we come to shew, that all kind of fiction is no more

allowable in poetry, than in painting.

Painters and poets therefore ought to examine feriously, whether the action they have undertaken to treat of, would have fenfibly affected us, had we really feen it; and they should remember alfo, that the imitation thereof will affect us a great deal less. They should not rely intirely upon their own penetration and judgment, in a decision whereon the fuccess of their works so greatly depends. Before they grow fond of their subjects, or become wedded, in a manner, to their personages, they ought to confult their friends, whilft it is yet in their power to reap any advantage from amicable advices. 'Tis extremely imprudent to defer asking opinion concerning a building, that is already raifed above ground, when the effential part of its plan can admit of no alteration, without subverting one half of the edifice.



CHAP. XIII.

That there are some subjects particularly adapted to poetry, and others specially proper for painting. Of the manner of distinguishing them.

The fubject of imitation ought not only to be interesting of its own nature, but moreover should be adapted to painting, if intended for the pencil; and proper for poetry, if designed for verse. There are some subjects that are much more suitable to painters than poets, and others that are sitter for poets than painters. I shall endeavour to explain this more at large; but as I have thought proper to be a little dissused, in order to render myself more intelligible, I am as a shall shall stand in need of the reader's indulgence for the prolixity of this discussion.

A poet can tell us several things, which a painter would find impossible to exhibit. He can express several of our thoughts and sentiments, which a painter cannot represent, by reason of their not being attended with any proper motion, particularly marked in our attitude, or precisely characterised in our countenance. The speech of Cornelia to Cæsar, where she discovers to him the conspiracy, that was just ripe for his destruction.

L'exemple que tu dois periroit avec toi!

May Rome the last example see in thee!

cannot be expressed by a painter. He may, indeed, by drawing Cornelia's countenance fuitable to her fituation and character, give us fome idea of her fentiments, and make us fensible, that fhe is speaking with a dignity that becomes her; but the thought of this Roman lady, who defires the death of the oppressor of the republic, as a punishment that may deter others from making any future attempts upon liberty, and not as a detestable crime, cannot be imaged by the pencil. There is no picturefque expression that can articulate, as it were, the words of old Horatius, where he answers the person, who had asked him, what his fon was able to do alone against three antagonists? Qu'il mourût, That be could die. A painter may indeed let us fee, that a man is moved with a particular passion, tho' he does not draw him in the action of venting it, because there is no one passion of the mind, that is not at the same time a passion of the body. But it is extremely rare, that a painter can express, so as to be sufficiently understood, the particular thoughts produced by anger, according to the proper character and circumstances of each person; or the fublime which it throws out in words adapted to the fituation of the per-Sonage that speaketh.

For example, Poussin could, in his piece of the death of Germanicus, express all the different

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forts and degrees of affliction, wherewith his friends and family were penetrated, when they faw him poisoned, and expiring in their arms; but he was incapable of giving us an account of the last sentiments of this prince, which are so extremely moving. This is left for the poet, who can make him fay, If a death so untimely as mine had snatched me away, even through some mistake of nature, I should yet have a right to complain of the severity of my destiny; but as I fall a victim to treachery and poison, I must exhort you, my friends, to be the avengers of my death, and not to blush to turn informers, to obtain my injured manes satisfaction: The public pity will certainly join with such accusers. A painter cannot express the greatest part of these thoughts, nor can he exhibit, in a fingle piece, more than one of fuch fentiments as he is capable of expressing. 'Tis true, that in order to make us understand the suspicion which Germanicus had of Tiberius's being the author of his death, he can draw Germanicus, flewing to his wife Agrippina, a figure of Tiberius, exhibited in a gesture and air proper for the distinguishing of such a thought; but he is then obliged to employ his whole piece in expressing this fingle fentiment.

As the picture, which represents an action, shews only an instant of its duration, it is impossible for the painter to express the sublime, which those things, that are previous to its present situation, throw sometimes into an ordinary sentiment. Poetry, on the contrary, describes all the remark-

able incidents of the action it treats of, and that which precedes reflects frequently the marvellous upon a very ordinary thing, which is faid or done in the fequel. 'Tis thus poetry may employ the marvellous that arises from circumstances, which may be called a relative sublime. Such is the fally of the Misanthrope, who, in giving a ferious account of the reasons that debarred him from settling at court, after a long deduction of real uneasy constraints, which he escapes by not frequenting the court, adds, Nor shall I be obliged to commend such Gentlemen's verses.

This thought becomes fublime, by means of the known character of the personage who is speaking, and of the ill treatment he had just before met with, for having said, that bad verses were of no manner of value,

'Tis far easier, without comparison, for the poet than the painter, to make us grow fond of his personages, and to interest us in their destinies. The external qualities, such as beauty, youth, majesty, softness, which the painter can give his personages, cannot interest us so much in their favor, as the virtues and qualities of the soul, wherewith the poet can imbellish his heroes. A poet can affect us as sensibly with the missortunes of a prince, whom we never heard mentioned before, as with the disasters of Germanicus, by reason of the grand and amiable character with which he can adorn the unknown hero, whom he is desirous of recommending to our affections.

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This furpasses a painter's skill, who finds himself reduced to make use of known personages, in order to move us; his greatest merit consisting in making us discover those personages with certainty and eafe. 'Tis reckoned a master-piece in Poussin, to have rendered Agrippina so easy to be distinguished in his picture of the death of Germanicus. After having treated the different kinds of affliction of the other personages of the picture, as passions that were capable of being expressed, he places on Germanicus's bed-side a woman of a noble dress and stature, hiding her face with her hands, and in an attitude intirely expressive of the deepest forrow. 'Tis easy to apprehend, that the affliction of this personage must surpass that of all the reft, fince this able artift, despairing to reprefent it, got over the difficulty by a witty contri-Those who know of Germanicus's having vance. had a wife that was excessively fond of him, in whose arms he breathed his last, can distinguish Agrippina with as much certainty, as the antiquarians know her by her head-dress and air, when copied from the medals of this princess. If Poussin be not the inventer of this poetic stroke, which very likely he borrowed of the Greeks, who painted Agamemnon with his face veiled at the facrifice of his daughter Iphigenia; yet this very stroke is an absolute master-piece in painting. The received custom in France is to call this great man le Poussin; so that this le, wherewith the Italians accompany their illustrious names, might induce one to think, that le Poussin was an Italian. But his

his name was Nicholas Pouffin, and he was born at Andeli in Normandy.

I have oftentimes wondered why painters, who have fo great an interest in making those personages known, by whose figures they intend to move us, and who find it so vastly difficult to diftinguish them sufficiently by the sole aid of the pencil, why, I fay, they do not accompany always their historical pieces with a short inscription. The greatest part of the spectators, who are in other respects capable of doing justice to the work, are not learned enough to guess at the subject of the picture. 'Tis to them sometimes an agreable person that strikes them, but talks a language they do not understand. People soon grow tired of looking at fuch pictures, by reason that pleasures, wherein the mind has no share, are of a very short duration.

The Gothic painters, rude and coarse as they were, had sense enough to know the utility of inscriptions, in order to render the subject of their pictures more intelligible. True it is, that they made as barbarous a use of that knowledge as of their pencils. They had the odd precaution to draw their sigures with rolls coming out of their mouths, whereon they wrote whatever they would have these heavy inactive sigures express; which was really making them speak. Tho' the rolls here mentioned, disappeared together with the Gothic taste; yet sometimes the greatest masters have judged two or three words necessary, in order to render their subjects intelligible: Nay, several have not

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even scrupled to write them on some part of the plan of their pieces, where they could be of no prejudice to the work. Raphael and Caraccio have acted thus; and Coypel has inscribed even several scraps of verses from Virgil, in the gallery of Palace Royal, in order to render those subjects more intelligible, which he had borrowed of the Æneid. Painters, whose works are ingraved, begin to grow sensible of the utility of these inscriptions; wherefore they put them at the bottom of such Prints, as are copied from their drawings.

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The poet is much furer than the painter of attaining to the imitation of his object. A poet may use several strokes to express the passion and fentiment of one of his personages. If some of his touches miscarry; if they do not exactly hit their aim; if they do do not communicate the intire idea they are defigned to express; still a fresh supply of happier itrokes can come up to the affiftance of the former. These, when joined together, will be able to effect what a fingle one would not have compassed, and will thus express the poet's idea in its full force. All the strokes, which Homer makes use of in order to paint the fury and impetuofity of Achilles, are not equally expressive; but the weak ones are strengthened by others, to whom they reciprocally communicate a greater force and energy. The feveral strokes, which Moliere emplyos in the drawing of his Misanthrope, are not all alike beautiful; but one helps out the other, and, affembled all together, they form the best drawn character, and the most accomplished portrait,

portrait, that has ever appeared on the stage. The case is quite different with a painter, who draws each personage but once, and can only make use of a fingle touch in the expressing of a passion on each feature of the countenance, where he intends to make this passion appear. If the stroke, which is to express the passion, be not well formed; if, for instance, when he paints a motion of the mouth, its contour is not that line precifely which he ought to have drawn, the painter's idea mifcarries; and the personage, instead of expressing a passion, makes only a grimace. The painter's fuccess in the drawing of any other feature, may indeed engage us to excuse his miscarriage in delineating the mouth, but it cannot fupply the touch that is wanting. It even frequently happens, that he attempts in vain to correct his mistake, recommencing again without any better fuccess; and, like those who strive to recollect fome particular word they have forgot, he finds every thing except that very stroke, which alone can form the expression he wants to imitate. Thus, tho' there are characters which a painter, morally speaking, is incapable of expressing, there are none but what a poet can copy. But we shall presently see, that there are also several beauties in nature, which a painter can more eafily copy, and form thereof much more moving imitations, than a poet.

All men are subject to grieve, to weep, to laugh, and are susceptible of a great variety of passions, but the very same passions have different characters to distinguish them. The passions are varied, even in persons, who, pursuant to the supposition of the artist, ought to be equally interested in the principal action of his piece. Age, country, temperament, sex, and profession, cause a difference between the symptoms of a passion produced by the same sentiment. The affliction of the spectators of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, arises from the same sentiment of compassion; and yet this very affliction ought to shew itself differently, according to the observation above made, in each spectator. Now it is beyond the poet's skill to render this diversity perceptible in his verse. If he does it on the stage, 'tis by the help of declamation, or by the action of the players.

We can eafily conceive, how a painter by the help of age, fex, country, profession, and temperament, varies the affliction of those who are prefent at the death of Germanicus; but it is difficult to comprehend how an epic poet, for example, can imbellish his poem with this variety, without loading it with descriptions, that must render his work heavy and difagreable. He must begin with a tiresome detail of the age, temperament, and even the apparel of the personages, whom he defigns to introduce into his principal action. An enumeration of that kind is scarce ever excusable; for if he makes it in the beginning of his work, the reader will forget it, and will be confequently infensible of those beauties, whose discovery depends on what has escaped his memory; if he makes this enumeration immedi-

ately before the catastrophe, it will be an unsupportable delay to the unravelling of the piece. Besides, poetry wants expressions proper for instructing us in the greatest part of these circumstances. 'Tis even as much as natural philosophy can compass, with all the affistance of proper and peculiar terms, to give a good description of the difference of complexion, and character of each spectator. In order to give an easy and distinct detail of all those particulars, they ought to be exposed to the sight.

On the contrary, nothing is more easy for a skilful painter, than to bring us acquainted with the age, the temperament, the fex, the profession, and even the country of his personages, by making use of their dresses, of the color of their Aesh, beards, or hair, of their heigth, thickness, and natural air; as also of the habit of their bodies, of their countenance, figure of their head, physiognomy, vivacity, motion and color of their eyes, and of feveral other things which ferve to diftinguish the character of a personage. Nature has implanted in us all an instinct, to discern the character of men; which instinct goes quicker and further than our reflections on the fensible marks of those characters are able to pervade. Now this diversity of expression is a wonderful mimic of nature, which, notwithstanding its uniformity, is always differenced in each subject by some particular characteristic. Where I do not find this diversity, I have no longer a view of nature, but of art. A picture wherein feveral heads and expreffions s body. The apolishment to him, surface

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The painter therefore meets with no obstruction from the mechanic part of his art, in assigning to each expression a particular character. It even frequently happens, that a painter, performing as a poet, fills his fancy, as a colorist and designer, with various beauties, which would never have occurred to him, had he not been obliged to express some poetic ideas. One invention produces another. But a few examples will throw a greater

light upon this reflection.

Every body knows the famous piece of Raphael, where Jesus Christ confirms to St. Peter the power of the keys in the prefence of the apoftles: 'Tis one of those tapestry pieces on the the Acts of the apostles, which pope Leo the Xth ordered to be made for the chappel of Sixtus the IVth, whereof the original cartoons are preferved in the gallery built by Queen Mary at Hampton-Court. St. Peter holding the keys in his hands, is on his knees before Jesus Chrift, and seems penetrated with an emotion conformable to his fituation; his gratitude and zeal for his mafter are visibly painted on his countenance. St. John the Evangelist is drawn in the form and attitude of a young man, as he was at that time : he feems to commend, with a motion of frankness quite natural to his age, the worthy choice which his mafter had made; a choice which it vilibly appears he would have made himself : so beautifully is the vivacity of his approbation marked painter by

by the air of his countenance, and the eager movement of his body. The apostle next to him, seems more advanced in years, and shews the physiognomy and countenance of a fedate man; wherefore, agreably to his character, he approves of the choice by a plain motion of the arms, and a nod of the head. At the furthermost end of the group one may diftinguish a fanguine and choleric man: he has a very fresh countenance, a reddish beard, a large forehead, a flat nose, and all the features of a supercilious person. He looks therefore with an air of disdain, and with a contracted brow on a preference, which it is easy to perceive he thinks unjust. Men of his temperament are very ready to fancy themselves not inferior to their neighbours. Next to him is placed another apostle confused in his countenance; whose melancholy complexion is eafily difcerned by a pale meagre face, a black broad beard; by the habit of his body; and in short, by all the strokes which naturalifts affign generally to this complex-He stoops, and fixing his eyes steadily on Jesus Christ, seems to be devoured with a black jealoufy, for a choice which he is not going to object against, though he is likely to retain a spirit of refentment for it a long time: in fine, it is as easy to diftinguish Judas in this figure, as if one were to fee him hanged to a fig-tree with a purse about his neck.

I have not improved here upon Raphael's genius; for I question whether it is even possible to carry a poetic invention farther than this great painter painter has done in his best pieces. Another picture of the same suit of hangings represents St. Paul announcing to the Athenians the unknown God, to whom they had erected an altar; Here Raphael has made a poetic master-piece of the auditory of this apostle, whilst he confines himself to the exactest probability. A Cynic leaning on his flick, and who may be diftinguished by his effrontery and rags, the characteristic of the fect of Diogenes, looks on St. Paul with a confummate impudence. Another philosopher, who by his air appears to be a man of refolution, hangs his chin over his breaft, quite absorbed in reflections, on the marvels he hears; fo that one may easily perceive he has been staggered, and is just going to submit to conviction. Another has his head hanging on his right shoulder, and stares at the apostle with a simple air of admiration, which feems unaccompanied at prefent with any other fentiment. Another holds the fore-finger of his right hand on his nose, and has the gesture and appearance of a person who has, at length, received very great lights relating to certain truths, whereof he had a long time a jumbled confused idea. Opposite to these philosophers the painter has drawn feveral young men and women, who express their furprize and emotion by geftures suitable to their age and sex. Spite and vexation are painted on the countenance of a man dreffed in fuch an apparel, as the lawyers among the Jews might have been supposed to have worn VOL. I. in

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in those days. The success of St. Paul's predication ought naturally to have produced this effect upon an obstinate Jew. The apprehension of growing tiresome prevents me from enlarging any further on the personages of this picture; but there is not one of them all, that does not give a most intelligible account of its sentiments to an

attentive spectator.

I shall produce yet another example, as the matter is of fufficient importance to bear it. 'Tis from Coypel's Susanna, a piece that was celebrated, even as foon as it came off the eafel. Susanna appears here before the people under an accusation of adultery; and the painter reprefents her in that very juncture, when the two old fellows were making their depositions against her. By her physiognomy, and the serene air of her countenance, in the midst of her affliction, it is easy to perceive, that though she casts down her eyes, 'tis not through remorfe but modesty. The grandeur and dignity of her air speak so strongly in her favour, that one feels, at the very first fight, an inclination to declare a prisoner innocent, who appears with fuch a countenance. The painter has diverlified the complexions of the famous old men; one appears fresh and sanguine, and the other choleric and melancholy. The latter, pursuant to the proper character of his temperament, which is obstinacy, commits the crime with heat and resolution. Rage and fury are spread through his whole countenance. The fanguine old fellow feems to relent, and, notwithstanding all the the transport of his passion, feels a remote that staggers his resolution. This is the natural character of men of that kind of complexion. They have fury and violence enough to seek revenge, but have not a cruelty and insensibility sufficient to behold the consequences of their resentment, without being touched with some motions of compassion.

'Tis easy to infer from what has been hitherto fet forth, that painting delights to treat of subjects, wherein it can introduce a great number of personages interested in the action. Such are the subjects above related, and such are also the murder of Cæfar, the facrifice of Iphigenia, and feveral others needless to be here mentioned. The emotion of the affiftants fixes them sufficiently to an action, once this action has the power of moving them. This emotion renders them actors, as it were, in a picture; whereas they can only be spectators in a poem. For example, were a poet to treat of the facrifice of Jephtha's daughter, he could introduce into his action but a very small number of interested actors. Those personages, who have not an effential concern in the action, in which they are to play their parts, are excessively frigid in poetry. The painter, on the contrary, can imbellish his action with as many spectators as he thinks proper. If they do but appear to be moved, there is no-body will alk what bufiness they have there.

Poetry therefore cannot take the benefit of for great a number of actors. We have already obferved, that a personage who is only indifferently

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interested in the action, makes but a very disagreable figure. If he be deeply interested, the
poem must fix his destiny, and tell us what is
become of him. The multitude of actors,
which a tragic poet employs sometimes in order
to conceal his sterility, becomes very often embarrassing to him, when, upon the unravelling
of the plot, he is obliged to get rid of them. He
is reduced therefore to the shift of forcing them
to make away with themselves by poison or sword,
on the very first motive that offers itself to his
imagination.

L'un meure vuide de sang, l'autre plein de sené 2. Some bloodless dy'd, and some by opium slept.

This is a verse of Boileau, which may be justly applied to these personages, tho' it was not designed for them. There is no demand made after the deceased person, he is carried off and interred. But this sanguinary reform, which converts the stage into a field of battle, prejudices the spectator against so many murders void of probability. 'Tis not the quantity of blood which is spilt, but the manner of spilling it, that forms the character of tragedy. Besides, the over-strained tragic becomes frigid, and one is more inclined to laugh at a poet, who expects to fall into the pathetic by dint of effusion of blood, than to shed tears at his piece. Some waggish sellows would be apt to send to know the list of his stain.

* BOILEAU Art. Poet, chant. 4. 10 10 100 100

But to carry on the comparison of dramatic poetry with painting, we shall find that the latter has the advantage of exhibiting to our sight such incidents of the action it treats of, as are properest for making a great impression. It can let us see Brutus and Cassius plunging their poniards into the heart of Cæsar; and the priest stabbing his knife into the bosom of Iphigenia. The tragic poet durst no more present us with these objects on the stage, than with the metamorphosis of Cadmus into a serpent, or of Progne into a swallow. These are the objects that Horace means where he says,

Digna geri promes in scenam, multaque tolles Ex oculis, quæ mox narret facundia præsens. HORAT. de Arte,

Yet do not every part too freely shew, Some bear the telling better than the view. CREECH.

even if the laws of tragedy, founded on very folid reasons, had not forbidden the producing of the abovementioned scenes on the stage; yet a prudent poet ought to have carefully avoided them. As the events contained in those scenes can never be acted with any decency or resemblance of truth, they degenerate into a childish and frigid spectacle. Our eyes are not so easy to be imposed on as our ears; for which reason some forts of sictions succeed better in a narrative, than in a representation. An event, which might be very G 3

affecting, were it told us with an ingenious choice of well-difplayed circumstances, and observing the rules of probability, would become a kind of puppet-shew, were all these circumstances to be represented on the stage. In fact, the metamorphoses exhibited on the stage in the French and Italian operas, generally extort laughter from the spectators, tho' the events be of a tragic nature. For which reason, a writer of tragedy is obliged to have recourse to a recital, in order to expose such events as are here in question. Now the recital of an actor, is no more than a second copy, and the imitation, in a manner, of an imitation.

Tho' the action exposed to us, as it were, in a recital, be very affecting of its nature, yet it will have less effect upon us than another action less tragical, which is exhibited to our sight in a dramatic representation. The first scene betwixt Roderigue and Chimene, moves us more than the narrative, which Chimene makes to the king upon the death of her father, tho' this narrative is made by a personage so much interested in the event. Nevertheless the death of the count is a much dreadfuller event, and consequently more capable of affecting us, than the conversation of Chimene and Roderigue, be it ever so interesting.

Those subjects, whose beauty confists principally in the elevation of mind displayed by the actors, in the nobleness of their sentiments, as also in circumstances that must both violently and continually agitate the personages that are interesti-

ed, and, of course, give rise to various bright sentiments, and lively discourses; those subjects, I say, are the happiest and noblest for a tragic poet. In treating of these, he can keep us always attentive, and even let us see all the principal events of his action, without being reduced to call in any recitals to his assistance. This discernment of subjects is of very great importance; wherefore painters, as well as poets, should be attentive to the advice of Horace in the following lines addressed to the latter,

Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, æquam Viribus. Hor. de Arte.

You writers, try the vigour of your muse, And what her strength will bear, and what refuse, And after that, an equal subject chuse.

CREECH.

"Whether you have a mind to draw a picture, or to write a poem, be as careful to pitch upon a fubject adapted to your pencil, if you are a painter, or to your pen, if a poet; as to chuse it agreable to the strength of your particular genius, and proportioned to your personal talents." We shall treat hereaster more at large of the latter kind of choice Let us return now such subjects as are particularly proper to be treated

A poet that treats of an unknown subject, can, generally speaking, make his personages known in the very first act; he can even, as we have already observed, render them interesting to the spec-

of, either in a poem or a picture.

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fitute of these means, ought never to attempt treating of an obscure subject; nor ought he to have any other personages, but such as are known by same to every body; or, at least, to the spectators of his piece. These, indeed, ought absolutely to have some knowledge of his personages, since the painter's business consists only in putting you in mind of them. We have made mention already of the indifference of spectators for a picture, whose subject they are unacquainted with.

A painter therefore ought to be very careful in this point at all times, but more especially when he is concerned in easel-pieces, whose lot it is to change frequently situation and masters. The subject of a fresco painted on the walls, or that of large pieces which remain always in the same place, tho' it be not known at present, may afterwards become so. 'Tis an easy matter to guess, that an altar-piece in a chapel represents some event of the life of that saint, under whose name it was dedicated. In short, that very same, which publishes the merit of those performances, acquaints people at the same time with the history, which the painter has adopted for his subject.

There are some subjects that are generally known, and others that are not well known but in parti-

cular countries.

The subjects most generally known in Europe, are those that are drawn from scripture. For which reason Raphael and Poussin have given these subjects

jects the preference, especially when they engaged in easel-pictures. Among Poussin's pieces there are three out of four, that represent some action taken from the bible. The principal events of the Greek and Roman history, as also the fabulous adventures of the several gods adored by those nations, are likewise subjects that are generally known. The received custom of all the polite nations of Europe requires now, that the most serious hours of children be employed in the study of Greek and Roman authors. In an application of this nature their heads are filled with the fables and histories of those countries, and what is learnt in their infancy does not afterwards so easily escape their memory.

We cannot say the same of modern history, whether ecclesiastic or prosane. Every country has its own saints, its own kings, and its illustrious personages, which, tho' they be extremely well known in that particular spot of ground, are not so easily distinguished in other countries. St. Petronius, in an episcopal habit, holding in his hand the city of Bologna, distinguishable by its principal buildings and towers, is not a figure so generally known in France, as it is in Lombardy. St. Martin cutting his cloak in two, a posture wherein he is commonly drawn by painters and sculptors, is not, on the contrary, a figure so well known in Italy as in France.

The French are generally acquainted with the history of their own country during the two last centuries. They have a common idea of the air and dress

dress of the most distinguished personages of this period. Yet a head of Henry the IVth would not render the subject of a picture so easy to be conjectured in Italy, as in France. Each country has even its particular sables and its imaginary heroes. The heroes of Tasso and Ariosto are not so well known in France, as they are in Italy. Those of the Astrea are better known to the French than to the Italians. I know of none but Don Quixot, a hero of a particular genius, whose prowesses are as well known amongst strangers, as among the countrymen of the ingenious Spaniard, who sirst gave him existence.

Horace is deservedly esteemed the most judicious author that has left any instructions for poets: Notwithstanding the advantages the latter have in rendering their personages known, and in acquainting the reader with the particulars of their subject, yet he thinks proper to give them the following advice:

Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus, Quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus. Hor. de arte.

Rather on subjects known your mind employ, And take from Homer some old tales of Troy, And bring those usual things again to view, Than venture on a subject wholly new.

CREECH.

"It would be much more adviseable for you, to chuse the subject of your piece from some of the events of the siege of Troy, tho so often extended the siege of th

" hibited on the stage, than to form the action of " your tragedy out of your own imagination, or " to raife heroes unknown to the world, from the " duft of some obscure old book, and to adopt " them for your personages." What would not Horace have faid on this subject, had his discourse been addressed to painters?

CHAP. XIV.

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That there are subjects particularly adapted to certain kinds of poetry and painting. Of the proper subjects of tragedy.

TITHERTO we have shewn, that there are some subjects more proper for poetry than painting, or for painting than poetry; we intend now to prove, that there are likewise subjects, which are more adapted even to some particular kinds of poetry and painting than to others. The facrifice of Iphigenia, for example, is fit only for a picture, wherein the painter can give his figures a certain magnitude. A subject of that nature will not bear representing with small figures, fuch as are deftined for the imbellishment of a landskip. A grotesque subject will not admit of figures drawn to the life. Figures drawn larger than to the life, would be improper for the representation of Venus's toiler. It would be to no purpole to alk me the physical reasons of these fitnesses or agreements; I can alledge none but the

the instinct which suggests them to us, and the example of the great painters that have observed them.

The same remark is applicable to poetry. Events of a tragic nature are improper to be treated in an epigram. An epigram may, at the most, heighten and give a proper lustre to some remarkable circumstance of these events; it may induce us to admire a particular touch, but cannot render it interesting to us. We can scarce find five or six good ones in either the ancient or modern collections upon subjects of this nature. Comedy will not admit of barbarous or inhuman actions, nor can Thalia use the imprecations, or inslict the punishments, that are due to the most shocking crimes. An ecloque is unfit for violent and sanguinary passions.

I shall make here a few reflections on the actions proper for tragedy, which may perhaps prevent those, who will read them attentively, from being mistaken in the choice of tragic sub-

jects.

As the principal end of tragedy is to excite terror and compassion, the tragic poet ought therefore, in the first place, to exhibit amiable and valuable perfonages, and represent them afterwards reduced to a very deplorable condition. We should commence with rendering those personages deserving of esteem, to whom we intend to conciliate the public compassion. 'Tis therefore proper that the personages of a tragedy should not deserve to be unhappy, or, at least, not so unhappy as they are represented.

presented. If their disasters are not merely the effect of the frowns of fortune, but a chaftifement for their faults, their demerit ought to be unequal to fo heavy a punishment. At least, if their faults happen to be of a real criminal nature, they ought not to include the guilt of a voluntary commission. Œdipus would be unfit to be the principal personage of a tragedy, had he known at the time of combat, that he had drawn his fword against his own father. The misfortunes of the wicked are not a proper subject to move us; they are a just punishment, the imitation whereof is incapable of exciting either terror or real compassion.

A terrible event is such as surprizes and terrifies us together. Now there is nothing less furprizing than the chaftisement of a man, who has merited the vengeance of heaven and earth for his iniquities. On the contrary, the impunity of great criminals would be a subject of surprize to us; consequently the punishment of such men cannot produce that terror and fear, which is an enemy to prefumption, and gives us a diffidence of ourselves. The punishment inflicted on great crimes does not feem to affect us. We are fufficiently fortified against the terror of committing the like offences, by the horror with which they inspire us. We may be afraid of the fame feverity of fate, as that which happened to Pyrrhus in Racine's Andromache, but hardly of committing crimes of as black a nature as those of Narciffus in Britannicus: A criminal

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that undergoes the punishment due to his crimes, does not excite our compassion in a poem. Were we to see his real punishment, we might indeed seel a mechanic compassion: but as the emotion produced by the imitation is not so powerful as that, which is excited by the object; the idea of the crimes committed by a tragic personage obstructs our being moved with the like compassion for him. There is nothing happens in the catastrophe, which we have not often wished for in the course of the piece; and then we applicate the wise dispositions of providence, which justifies at length its slowness in proceeding to punishment.

Every one must be sensible that we mean in poetry by a criminal, a man that willingly violates the precepts of the law of nature, unless he happens to be excused by some particular law of his country. The respect for the laws of that fociety, whereof a person is a member, is so great a virtue? that it is sufficient to excuse on the stage an erfor, whereby the law of nature is violated. Thus, when Agamemnon attempts to facrifice his daughter. he violates the law of nature, without being a criminal in poetry; because he is excused by his Submission to the laws and religion of his country. by which fuch murders were authorised. The horfor of the crime must be charged to the law of his country. We pity the misery of the people of those times, who were incapable of differning the law of nature amidst the clouds, wherewith falle religion had enveloped it. The fame may be faid with indi

with respect to the murderers of Cæsar, by reason of their having been educated in this maxim, that violent methods were allowable against a citizen, who attempted to bring his equals into subjection, or who, to make use of the Roman phrase, affect-

ed tyranny.

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But a Roman, cotemporary with Cæfar, that would attempt to facrifice his own daughter, would be reckoned a villain, for violating a facred precept of the law of nature, without having the excuse of the laws of his country to plead by; for the Romans had, long before that, prohibited the facrificing of human victims, and even obliged the free nations that lived under their protection, to observe this prohibition. An excufable mistake can therefore re-instate, as it were, the personage that commits an act contrary to the law of nature; but I am far from giving the first motions and transports of passion a power of excufing a great crime; no, not even upon the stage. He who is hurried away by the first impulse of his passion to commit a great crime, is always a villain. Passion is no excuse for the voluntary murder of one's wife, not even by the law of poetic morality, the only one here confidered; and, of all others, the most indulgent. Crimes of fo deep a dye are fo repugnant to hearts not intirely correspeed, that it is not fufficient to have been deprived, in some measure, of one's presence and liberty of mind in committing them; to avoid being branded as a villain. 'Tis not by dint of reflection, or by withstanding the temptation,

temptation, that a man, who has any remains of virtue, avoids committing them; no, 'tis because he has no such motion in him as can lead him to commit the like excesses; having an horror by instinct, and, if I may be allowed the expression, a mechanic aversion to all such unnatural actions. If the first motion of passion could impel him to such crimes, the first motion of virtue should be also able to with-hold him. For have not virtues their first motions as well as our vicious passions?

CHAP. XV.

Of the personages of villains, that may be introduced into tragedies.

hibit the introducing of the perfonages of villains into tragedy. The principal defign of this kind of poem is to excite terror and compassion for some, but not for all its personages. Thus the poet, in order to attain more certainly his end, may excite in us other passions, that are capable of preparing us for being more lively touched with compassion and terror, which ought always to predominate in tragic Scenes. The indignation we feel against Narcissus, produces the compassion and terror arising from the missortunes of Britannicus. The horror, with which we are inspired at the discourses of Enone.

Œnone, renders us more fensible of Phædra's unhappy destiny. The bad effect of the counsels, which the poet makes this confidante give constantly to Phædra, when she is upon the point of repenting, renders this princess more deserving of pity, and her crimes more shocking and dreadful. should be afraid of receiving such counsels in the like conjunctures. 'Tis allowable therefore to introduce the personages of villains into a poem, in the same manner as executioners have a place in a picture reprefenting a faint's martyrdom: but as a painter would be cenfured for rendering those men amiable by their looks, whom he draws perpetrating an odious or flagitious action; in like manner a poet would be blamed for dreffing his villanous personages with qualities capable of engaging the benevolence of the spectator. Such a benevolence might be carried fo far as to render the villain an object of pity, and to diminish the horror of the crime by the compassion raised for the criminal. This would be acting diametrically opposite to the principal end of tragedy, to its defign of purging the passions.

Care ought also to be taken, to prevent the principal interest of the piece from falling on flagitious personages. A villain is incapable of interesting us of himself. The spectator therefore is affected with his adventures, only inasmuch as these adventures are the incidents of an event, wherein personages of an opposite character have a considerable interest. Who is it that gives any great attention to the death of Narcissus in the play of Britannicus?

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There are some forts of villains, that ought never to appear upon the stage upon any account whatfoever; these are your impious ones. I give here the appellation of impiety to all those extravagant discourses, which thro' a senseless presumption are raised against religion in general, or against that which is particularly professed in the place where the scene is supposed to be transacted, be it what it will. Wherefore my opinion is, that one ought never, for example, to introduce upon the the stage a Roman making a scoff of the fire of Vesta, nor a Greek contumeliously treating the Delphic oracle, as an imposture devised by the priests of Apollo. It would be needless to obferve here, that those, who, like Polieuctes, speak in opposition to a religion framed by men, from a conviction they have of the true one, are not liable to the censure here mentioned of impiety. The very terms of my proposition are sufficient to obviate the least shadow of that kind of suspicion.

But some will object, that Phædra wilfully transgresses the most sacred rights of the law of nature. Thus she is in love with her husband's son, she talks to him of her passion, and uses all her artifice to seduce him; and to conclude with what compleats the character of the most profligate villany, she charges the innocent with the very crime she herself has committed. And yet the missortunes of Phædra excite compassion, when exhibited in Racine's tragedy. The same may be also said of several pieces of the ancient tragedians.

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My answer to this objection is, that Phædra does not commit voluntarily the crimes for which the is punished. 'Tis a divine impulse that forces her to perfidy and incest; an impulse which, in the fystem of paganism, is irrelistible to mortals. After what passes between Phædra and her confidante in the first act, relating to the aversion of Venus to the posterity of Pasiphae, and to the revengeful spirit of this Goddess, who determines our unfortunate princess to all the harm she does, her crimes have no other criminal appearance, but that of being followed with the punishment. The deteftation and horror falls all upon Venus; and Phædra, more unfortunate than she deferves, must be allowed to be a right tragic perfonage.

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Speron Speroni, a poet of the feventeenth century, has wrote an Italian tragedy, intitled Canacea a, which may pass at least for one of the best tragedies extant in the Italian language. The declamatory taste prevails there a great deal less, than in the generality of the tragic pieces of his countrymen. The subject of his tragedy is the unhappy adventure of Macareus son of Æolus, and of Canacea Macareus's sister. Venus, to be revenged for Æolus's having persecuted Æneas, inspires the children of Æolus with a criminal passion for one another b, in consequence of which Canacea commits incest with her brother. The action

a Printed at Venice in 1617.

Act. 1. Scene 1.

of this tragedy drew the censure of the great wits of Italy upon Speroni; but we think ourselves obliged to condemn their delicacy, upon the perusal of the differtation, which this author wrote in justification of the choice of his subject. Now as the fate of Phædra resembles that of Canacea, whatsoever the Italian poet alledges in his defence, serves equally to vindicate the Frenchman, for which reason I shall refer the reader to the said differtation.

It would be unnecessary to take notice here, that in reading a theatrical piece, we must admit as true, the salse suppositions, which were received at the time the action happened; it being evident that we should accommodate ourselves to the opinions adopted by the actors. In order to judge rightly of their conduct, we ought to enter into their ideas, and think as they did. Thus, in seeing the tragedy of Phædra, we should humour the supposition which made the heathen Gods authors and avengers of crimes, notwithstanding this supposition is more shocking to good sense, than the most extravagant tale of Ovid's Metamorphoses.



CHAP. XVI.

Of tragedies that are defective in the choice of their subjects.

IS not only necessary that the character of the principal personages be such as can interest us, but 'tis proper also that the accidents which befal them, be fuch as can make a tragic impression upon men of sense, and strike terror even into a man of courage. A prince at the age of forty, represented in a state of despair, and in a disposition of making away with himfelf, because his glory and interest oblige him to part from his confort, with whom he has lived in a continued scene of fondness during twelve years; fuch a prince, I fay, can never inspire us with a compassion for his misfortune. We should never be able to sympathize with him through five acts. The greatest excess of passion, in which the poet could dress his hero, and all that he could make him fay, to convince the spectators, that he is inwardly in the most frightful agitation, would only contribute to render him more contemptible. By endeavouring to render the action interesting to us, the hero would become indifferent. The knowledge of what passes every day in the world, and the experience of our friends, if not our own, are sufficient to inform us, that a passion which has been indulged for the space of twelve years, wears itself at length into a simple habit. A hero, whose H 3 glory

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glory and interest call upon him to break this habit, ought not to be so afflicted therewith, as to become a tragic personage. He ceases to have the dignity requisite for the character of tragedy, when his affliction proceeds so far as despair. A missortune of that nature could not overcome him, had he but a little of that constancy, without which he cannot be a man of honor, much less a hero. But glory, some will say, triumphs at last; and Titus, against whom, we see, this remark is levelled, sends home Berenice.

To this I reply, that those struggles of Titus are not becoming his dignity, nor fit to occupy the tragic stage during the representation of five acts. To alledge that virtue subdues, at length, his passion, does not justify sufficiently the character of Titus. Such an excuse as that might, at the most, justify the character of a young princess, who, during four acts, had exposed this prince's weakness. But 'tis injuring the reputation which Titus left behind him; 'tis running counter to the laws of probability and the real pathos, to dress him in so soft and effeminate a character. The historian, of whom Monsieur Racine has borrowed the subject of his piece, mentions only, that Titus fent back Berenice, and that they parted with regret from one another. This author does not fay, that he abandoned himself to all that excess of forrow, wherein the above-mentioned piece continually plunges him. But supposing

² Berenicem statim ab urbs dimisit, invitus invitam. Suet. in Tit. Vesp. sect. 7.

POETRY and PAINTING. 103

even that the adventure had been related by Suetonius with all the circumstances in which Racine has dreffed it, yet he ought not to have pitched upon it as a proper subject for tragedy. glory of the fuccess does not attone for the infamy of a struggle, wherein we ought to have been immediately victorious. An enemy of an unequal force gets the advantage of us in some meafure, if he maintains the combat fo as to hold the victory too long suspended. In fact, were ten thousand Germans to fight for twelve hours together against fix thousand Turks in an open field, they would be even ashamed of their victory. Thus, notwithstanding Berenice is a very methodical piece, and extremely well wrote, yet the public does not relish it with so much pleasure as Phædra, and Andromache. cine had made a wrong choice of his subject; or, to tell the truth, he was weak enough to engage in it at the instances of a great princefs. Besides, this was a task he undertook in the absence of that friend, whose advices had proved fo often of service to him. Boileau has frequently faid, that he would have hindered his friend from racking himself upon a subject so improper for tragedy as that of Berenice, had he been at hand to diffuade him from promising to undertake it.

We ought therefore to inspire always sentiments of veneration for personages that are destined for commanding our tears. We should never dress such men in buskins, as are inserior to several of our own acquaintances; otherwise we

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shall incur the same censure, as if we had done what Quintilian a calls, making a child att the part and character of Hercules.

CHAP. XVII.

Whether it be proper to intermix love in tragedies.

Y subject leads me here naturally to the discussing of two questions. The first is, Whether it be proper to intermix love in tragedies? And the second, Whether our tragic poets do not give this passion too great a share in the intrigues of their pieces?

Men, whom we regard as worthy of our esteem, have a power of interesting us in their various agitations and misfortunes; but we are more particularly affected with the inquietudes and afflictions of such, as resemble us in their passions. Those discourses that remind us of ourselves, and entertain us with our own sentiments, have a particular attractive to engage us. Tis therefore natural for us to be prejudiced in favor of imitations, wherein we discern ourselves represented in others; that is, wherein we behold personages abandoned to such passions, as we either at present feel, or have formerly been swayed by.

Personam Herculis et cothurnos aptare infantibus. QUINT.

Man without passions is a chimera; but man, a slave to all passions, is a being equally chimerical. The same constitution of body that gives us up in prey to some, secures us from others. Wherefore there are only some particular passions which bear a special relation to us, the description whereof has the privilege and right of command-

ing our attention.

Those who are not susceptible of the same passions as ourselves, do not resemble us so much as those, that are; the latter being related to us by a particular connexion. For instance, Achilles, impatient to set out for the siege of Troy, draws every body's attention; but still his fate is much more interesting, with respect to a young fellow, that pants with thirst of military glory; than to a man whose ambition is to attain to the command of himself, in order to become more deserving of empire over others. The latter will be more engaged with the character which Corneille gives the emperor Augustus in his tragedy of Cinna, a character which will have but a very feeble effect upon the admirer of Achilles.

The picture of a passion which we have never selt, or of a situation wherein we have never been, can never move us in so lively a manner as the description of such passions and situations, as either are, or have been formerly, our own case. In the sirst place, the mind is but slightly touched with the picture of a passion whose symptoms it is a stranger to; it is asraid even of being the dupe of an unfaithful imitation. Now the mind has but an

imperfect knowledge of passions which the heart never felt; all the information we can receive of others, being insufficient to give us a just and precise idea of the agitations of a heart, over which they tyrannize. Secondly, our heart must have very little inclination to such passions, as we have been insensible of at twenty-five years of age. The heart attains to its sull strength much earlier than the mind; and it is almost impossible, methinks, for a man of that age not to have felt the motions of all those passions, which he is sated to by his constitution.

How is it possible for persons, who are no way inclinable to a passion, nor moved with an object, to be lively touched with its description? How is it possible for a man, that has no taste of military glory, and who looks upon what is commonly called a great conqueror, only as a madman and a burthen to mankind; how is it possible, I say, for him to be deeply affected with the restless motions of the impetuous Achilles, when he imagines a conspiracy formed, to prevent him from going to acquire immortality by the taking

of Troy?

A man, who is infensible of the charms and allurements of gaming, is not a bit moved with the distress of a person who has lost considerable sums at play, unless he happens to be related to him by some of those particular interests, which make us share in all the sentiments of another person, so as to sympathize with him when he is afflicted. Without some motive of that nature, a man

a man who does not like gaming, will only pity the gamester for having contracted the dangerous habit of exposing the sweetness of his temper, and the calm of life, to the mercy of dice and cards. 'Tis amongst such as are afflicted with the like misfortune as ourselves, that we are led by instinct to look out for those, that will make themselves partners of our pains, and console us with their sympathy. Dido conceives immediately a tender compassion for Æneas, obliged to sly his country, because she had been obliged herself to sly from hers. She had gone thro' the very same scenes of affliction as Æneas, pursuant to what Virgil makes her say:

Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco. VIRG. Æn. 1,

Like you, an alien in a land unknown, I learn to pity woes fo like my own.

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'Tis very common to form a judgment of the natural motions of the heart in general, by what we feel ourselves. Those, who have no propensity to a particular passion, are apt to imagine, that the transports wherewith a poet sills his scenes, and which he displays as a natural consequence of a passion, that has never made any impression upon them, are not exposed according to truth. Either the consequences of such a passion appear to them as mere sallies of the irregular fancy of an extravagant poet; or else the personages

fonages of the piece cease to have the power of interesting them. They regard them no longer as men disturbed with passion, but as persons fallen into a state of real frenzy and madness. According to their way of thinking, these people are less proper to form a character for the imitation of the stage, than to be confined to some of those houses, wherein polite nations shut up such, as are disordered in their intellects.

The frantic transports of a person tyrannized by ambition, and quite reduced to despair upon feeing the rival he flighted most, elevated to an eminent post that had been a long time the object of his wishes; these transports, I say, may have a lively effect upon fuch as are fensible by their own experience, that the paffion described by the poet is capable of exciting fuch furious motions in human breafts. But all these agitations, which some writers call the fever of ambition, affect but weakly those, whom their natural tranquillity has permitted to nourish their minds with philosophical reflections; and who are sufficiently convinced that the distributers of posts and employments, are frequently prevailed upon, in all ages and countries, by unjust or frivolous motives. Their knowledge of past transactions, and their infight into futurity, prevents their being furprized at what they fee at prefent. Not moved, not even surprized at the most extravagant preferments, they are very little disposed to sympathize with a person, whom the promotion of a rival has bereft of his understanding

POETRY and PAINTING. 109 ing. To what purpose is it, they will say, to fall into despair for a disappointment that is as common amongst men as a feverish disorder?

Curentur dubii medicis majoribus ægri,
Tu venam vel discipulo committe Philippi.
JUVEN. Sat. 13.

A desperate wound must skilful hands employ, But thine is curable by Philip's boy.

CREECH.

There is no occasion for a stock of philosophy to support such a misfortune as this with resolution. 'Tis sufficient for that end to be only master of common sense.

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he dng Poets therefore cannot be blamed for chusing for the subject of their imitations the effects of those passions, of which men are most generally susceptible. Now, of all passions, love is the most general; there being scarce any body, but what has had the missortune of feeling the effects of it in some part of his life. This is sufficient to engage a person to sympathize with such as groan under its tyrannical sway.

Our poets therefore could not, methinks, incur any censure for giving love a place in the intrigues of their pieces, were it done with moderation. But they have pushed their complaisance too far for the taste of their own times; or, to express it better, they have even encouraged this taste themselves by a servile condescension. By improving one upon another, they have converted

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the tragic stage into a drawing room. Racine has stuffed his pieces more with love than Corneille; and most of those that succeeded Racine, finding it easier to imitate him in his defects than in his perfections, have gone on in the same bad road, even surther than that celebrated poet.

CHAP. XVIII.

That our neighbours object against our poets for intermixing too much love in their tragedies.

A S the taste of setting the springs of tra-I gedy a going by the impressions of love was unknown to the ancients; as it is not even founded on truth, and almost continually strains the rules of probability; perhaps it will cease to be the taste of our posterity. Our fuccessors therefore will have a right to find fault with the abuse, which our tragic poets have made of their wit; a right to censure them for the character they have given of Tircis and Philene, and for having made love the spring of all the actions of fo many illustrious personages; who lived at a time, when the prevailing idea of the character of a great man, admitted of no mixture of the like infirmities. They will condemn our poets, for having made an amorous intrigue the cause of all the disturbances that happened

happened at Rome, when a conspiracy was formed for the recalling of the Tarquins; and for having represented the Roman youth of those days so polite, and even so timorous before their mistresses; that youth whose opposite character is sufficiently known, from the recital made by Livy, of the adventure of Lucretia.

A celebrated poet of a neighbouring and rival nation, has been pleased to drop, in fundry parts of his works, feveral unkind reflections on our French tragedians. This writer pretends, that the itch of throwing love into all the intrigues of our tragedies, and into almost all the characters of the personages, has led our poets into several mistakes. One of the least considerable consists in drawing frequently a false picture of love. is far from being a gay passion. True love, the only one that is deferving of making its appearance on the tragic stage, is almost always chagrin, melancholy, and ill-humoured. fays our English writer, such a character as this would foon be disagreable, were the French poets to give it frequently to their lovers. The French ladies, who require a particular tribute of complaifance, would not think fuch heroes fufficiently agreable. Real love exposes frequently even the most serious personages to ridicule. In fact, the pit laughs almost as heartily as at a comedy, at the representation of the last scene of the fecond act of Andromache, where Racine draws a very natural picture of the folly and

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and transports of real love, in the several discourses between Pyrrhus and his friend Phoenix.

The English author continues his remarks, and pretends that our poets, in order to introduce love every-where, have got a habit of giving the appellation of love and passion to the general inclination of one fex for the other, determined in favor of a particular person by some sentiments of esteem and preference. Thus they have given the honor of the buskin to a mechanic inclination, which is far from having any thing tragical in its nature, or of being capable of balancing the other passions. Some even have not blushed to give the name of real love to a passion which receives its origin only during the reprefentation of the piece; tho' it be contrary to all probability, that an infant emotion should grow up in one day to the very height and extremity of paffion. When love is to act any character of importance, it ought at least to be of some standing; it ought to have had leifure to take root in the heart; and even to have been fed with fome hopes of fuccess: Tho' we must acknowledge, that the most reputable of our French poets do not amuse us with those subitaneous paffions.

This is what renders the wooers of our French tragedies so unlike the character of men that are really in love. One would imagine, that love were the gayest of passions, to hear all the pretty conceits, with which these lovers entertain their beloved objects. Their whole discourse is imbellished

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with those ingenious touches, those brilliant metaphors, and, in fine, with all those florid expressions, that can rise only in a free imagination. One hears them continually applauding the irons they are settered with, and wishing that their chains may prove eternal; an evident argument they do not seel the weight of them. Instead of looking upon their passion as one of the most humbling infirmities, they consider it as a glorious virtue, and please themselves with that notion. But what is sufficient alone to evince, that they are not really in love, is their pretending to make love agree with reason, two things as incompatible as reason and a burning sever.

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Quæ res

Nec modum habet neque consilium, ratione modoque Tractari non vult. In amore hæc sunt mala, bellum, Pax rursum. Hæc si tempestatis prope ritu Mobilia et cæcâ fluitantia sorte, laboret Reddere certa, sibi nihilo plus explicet ac si Insanire paret certa ratione modoque.

HORAT. fat. 3. 1. 2.

Sir, reason must be never us'd in love:

It's laws unequal, and it's rules unsit,

For love's a thing by nature opposite

To common reason, common sense and wit.

All that's in love's unsteady, empty, vain,

There's war and peace, and peace and war again.

Now he that strives to settle such as these,

Mere things of chance, and faithless as the seas,

Vol. I.

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He were as good design to be a fool By art and wisdom, and be mad by rule.

CREECH.

" Lovers, fays Horace, act quite inconfiftently.

They quarrel without any provocation, and are

" reconciled without reason. The ideas of lovers

" have no fort of connexion. The course of their

" thoughts is as irregular as that of those waves,

"which are capriciously tost at the pleasure of the

" winds during the raging of a tempest.

" tempt to subject these thoughts to fixt principles, " or to pretend to range them in any methodical

" order, is the same as if one should insist upon a

" frantic person's having a continued thread of

" fentiments in the midst of his deliriums." the substance of things that are set before some nations is of very little fignification, provided they be

tost up in the form of a ragoo.

Another inconveniency, adds the fame English author, which arises from the abuse of mixing love every where, confifts in this, that the French poets-make lovers and wooers, after their own fancy, of princes advanced in years, and of heroes who in all ages have had a reputation of fleadiness; a very different character from that, wherein our poets represent them. These poor disfigured heroes will probably appear to the posterity of their present admirers, as personages that have been industriously dawbed over, only to be rendered more ridiculous. They will confider as a burlefque kind of poetry, which formerly obtained in France, those pieces wherein

wherein Brutus, Arminius, and other personages illustrious for the inflexibility of their courage, nay, even for their ferocity, are represented as foft and They will be apt to rank those dying lovers. poems in the same class with Virgil travested. This must be sooner or later the fate of those poets, who will not submit to copy nature in their imitations, who never trouble their heads whether their personages have any refemblance with other men, and are fatisfied with their only having somewhat of an agreable air. This is quite forgetting the fage leffon which Boileau gives in the third Canto of his Art of Poetry, where he most judiciously decides, that we ought always to preferve the national character of the personages.

Gardez donc de donner, ainsi que dans Clelie, L'air et l'esprit François a l'antique Italie, Et sous des noms Romains faisant notre portrait, Peindre Caton galand, & Brutus dameret.

And strive to shun their fault who vainly dress An antique hero like some modern ass; Who make old Romans like our English move, Show Cato sparkish, or make Brutus love.

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The same English author pretends, that the ancient chivalry has lest in the minds of some nations a taste, that makes them fond of discovering every where a kind of love without passion, which is what they call gallantry; a fort of politeness which those ingenious and civilized nations the Greeks and Romans were utter strangers to. This gallantry, he says, which the

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French (who feldom mind fearching into the bottom of things), have never rightly defined, is an affectation of expressing by the politeness of one's behaviour to the ladies, fentiments of a feigned love, which flatters and amuses them. According to our author, the French nation has too great a propensity to affectation; and when she began to throw off her rufticity, without having yet attained a true politeness, she was desirous of making a greater shew of genteelness than she was really possessed of. With too much good sense to be still infected with barbarism, and not sufficiently refined to be acquainted with the dignity of the manners, she fancied to herself some merit in love, which fenfible nations are strangers to. She imagined therefore that there was a kind of virtue in a fervile dependance on the will, or, to speak more truly, on the caprices of fome damfel, in making her the fpring of all one's actions, and in living merely to ferve her. The carroufels and tournaments encouraged this kind of folly with their liveries, their devices, and the rest of their nonfense. In short it became at length the mode to fall in love in a country, where every thing is decided by mode, even the merit of generals and preachers. From hence arose the extravagances of fuch a number of wooers, whereof the greatest part were far from being in love. Some have had their brains knocked out, in attempting to write the name of their imaginary flame on the walls of belieged towns; others were fent out of the world, in striving to break against .113.00

against the gates of an enemy's town, their lance inriched with the ribbons of fome miftress, whom they either did not love, or loved but indifferently. It appears from history, that several of these gentlemen have gone through the fame adventures for fo noble a fubject, as those which happened to Hudibras, when he went rambling about the country, to restore every body to their liberties and properties, even the very bears which were forced to dance about in the fairs and bear-gardens. A prince, he fays, gets himfelf killed at a tournament, by infifting to break another lance in honor of the ladies. Another runs the risk a hundred times of breaking his neck, because he thought it a greater piece of gallantry to be hoisted by the help of a rope-ladder into his mistress's apartment, than to go in at the door. A third descends into the lion's den to fetch his mistress her glove, which she had thrown there on purpose to make him go in fearch of it, thinking to acquire thereby an imaginary honor at the risk of a man's life, whose infatuation ought rather to have excited her com-But we have faid enough concerning those filly caprices, which would make the French and Spaniards, and some other nations, appear as fools to the Greeks under the reign of Alexander, and to the Romans under Augustus; could they but come back a little from the other world. Romances of chivalry and pastoral tales have also encouraged among the French the pernicious taste of intermixing love with every This is the fpring of that imaginary thing. I 3 love,

love, which appears in the most part of their writings. Strangers, and especially those whose humor determines them to approve of no images or descriptions, but such as are copied from real nature, read these passages without the least emotion.

It happens quite otherwise with regard to the pictures of love that are extant in the writings of the ancients; they move still, and have in all ages moved, the people of all countries, by reason that truth hath the same effect in all ages and nations. These pictures sind everywhere hearts sensible of those motions, of which they are such ingenuous imitations. Thus the love, which the better poets of Greece interspersed in their works, had a prodigious effect upon the Romans, because of the Greeks having painted this passion in all its natural colors,

Spirat adhuc amor Vivuntque commissi calores Æoliæ sidibus puellæ.

Hor. Od. g. 1. 4.

And Sappho's charming lyre Preserves her soft desire, And tunes our ravish'd souls to love.

CREECH.

fays Horace, speaking of the verses of Sappho. I refer the reader to the ode of that poetess which Boileau rendered into French in his translation of Longinus, for a just description of the symptoms of the passion of love. The pictures of this passion, that are extant in the poems of the Romans, move us in the same manner, as those, which are among

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mong the poetic writings of the Greeks, affected formerly the Romans. The lovers, which thefe two nations have introduced into their works, are not cold infipid gallants, but men hurried away involuntarily by transports that command them, and who make frequent, but ineffectual efforts, to pluck from their hearts those darts, whose piercing wounds have thrown them into despair. Such is the eclogue of Virgil, which bears the name of Gallus.

C H A P. XIX.

Of the gallantry that is interspersed in our.

I Shall present here likewise my countrymen with the remarks of another English writer on the gallantry of our poets. The relation of other authors sentiments has something in it so engaging, as one cannot help being fond of hearing them; and on such subjects as are here under our examination, 'tis neither unfair nor dangerous to satisfy the curiosity of such, as are any ways concerned.

Monsieur Perrault a had reproached the ancients with having been ignorant of what we call galantry, whereof there was not the least flourish in

² Parallels of the ancients and moderns. Tom. 2.

any of their poets; whereas the writings of the French poets, either in verse or prose, (by the latter are meant romances) are all strewed with this fort of ornaments. Mr. Wotton, who had efpoused in England the party of the moderns, and had defended against my Lord Orrery the same cause as Monsieur Perrault maintained in France, abandons his fellow-champion when he enters this lift. He will not allow our poets to claim any merit from what, in his opinion, is an infipid heap of jargon, and is commonly called gallantry. This, fays our English author a, is a fentiment whereof there is no veftige in nature, and one of the extravagant affectations, which the depraved tafte of the age has rendered fashionable. Ovid and Tibullus have mixed no fuch thing as gallantry in their writings. Shall we fay that they were unacquainted with the heart of man, and with the tempests which the passion of love hath the power of exciting? The emotion we feel even in the perufal of their verses, is a sufficient argument of nature's delivering herfelf in her own language. Poets, and writers of romances, continues Mr. Wotton, b fuch as D'Urfe, Calprenede, and fuch like, who in order to make a parade of their wit, reprefent their personages full of love and gaiety at the fame time, and make them chatter away fo agreably; recede as far from probability as Varillas

Wotton's reflections upon ancient and modern learning, ch. 4.

b Ibid. p. 52.

does from truth. Now as truth is the foul of history, fo probability is the foul of all fiction and poetry. 'Tis the refemblance of truth that moves us, and induces us to fet a value upon a work and its author.

When I mention Mr. Wotton's having defended the fame cause as Monsieur Perrault, I should add, that Mr. Wotton, in making the knowledge of the moderns superior to that of the ancients in most arts and sciences, grants nevertheless, that with respect to poetry and eloquence the ancients have far furpassed the moderns. 'Tis to this purpose he explains himself in the above-mentioned chapter. To which he adjoins what follows.

But these are qualifications which Monsieur Perrault extremely wants, who has neither Greek nor Latin enough to undertake to make a parallel between ancient and modern orators and poets. A particular inquiry into whose mistakes would lead me too far out of the way; and besides the world would think me very vain, to attempt any thing of this kind, after what the famous Monsieur Despreaux has done already in his critical reflections on Longinus: for there he has given so just a vindication of those great men, whom he so well knows bow to imitate, that what soever I can say after bim, will appear flat and insipid.

But to return to our gallantry, one stroke enervates frequently the most pathetic part of a poem. It suspends for a while the affectation we had conceived for the personage. Rinaldo invo-

[.] Page 56.

luntarily in love, because he is overpowered by the enchantments of Armida, gives me a very fensible concern for his misfortune. I am affected with his passion, when he opens the fcene, by faying to his miftress who was going only just for a moment out of his presence: Armida, thou art going to leave me 2! and when, upon her telling him the important motive, that obliges her to quit him for fo short a time, he makes her no other reply, but, Armida, thou art going to leave me! Here Rinaldo has the appearance of a man intirely abandoned to love. For love cannot discover nor express itself better than by this repetition. 'Tis a mark of the intemperance of his passion to be deaf to the reasons that are produced to him. But shortly after Rinaldo becomes a finical and affected lover, when, upon his mistress's faying, Behold in what place I leave you; he answers her with this fulsome compliment, Can I behold any thing but thy charms?

'Tis in the quality of an historian that I relate here what our neighbours say of us. If I frequent the company of strangers in order to get acquainted with their sentiments, it does not follow that I renounce, by so doing, the received sentiments of my own country. I can say, like Seneca, that I frequently pass over into the enemy's camp, but as a spy, not as a deserter. 'Tis the business of our poets to examine how far they ought to

² Opera of Armida. Act 1. scen. 1.

b Soleo sæpe in aliena castra transire, non tanquam transsuga, sed tanquam explorator. Senec. ep. 2.

pay a deference to the criticism of our neighbours. But I fancy I have dwelt long enough upon these two questions, whether it be proper to admit of love in tragedies, and whether our poets do not give it too great a share in the intrigue of their pieces. There remains now only a few words more for me to mention upon this subject.

CHAP. XX.

Of some maxims proper to be observed in treating of tragic subjects.

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T is a point of great importance for tragic poets, to make us admire those personages, whose missortunes are to cost us tears before the tragedy can succeed. Now the soibles of love disfigure several heroic characters, that would have inspired us with veneration, had they not been debased by these imbecillities.

The same reason which ought to oblige poets not to let love gain too great an empire over their heroes, should engage them also to chuse their heroes at a certain distance of time from that, which we ourselves live in. There is a greater respect paid to persons at a distance, says Tacitus²; 'tis easier to inspire us with veneration for such men as are only known to us by what accounts we have received of them from history, than for those who have lived in such a proximity of time to ours, that

^{*} Major e longinque reverentia. Tacit.

even a recent tradition is capable of instructing us exactly in the particulars of their life. We know so many minute circumstances relating to the soibles of such great men, as either we or our cotemporaries have seen, which put them so much upon a level with the common run of mankind, that it is impossible for us to have such a degree of veneration and respect for them, as we are accustomed to pay to the great men of Rome and Athens. We are more inclinable, says Paterculus, to commend things we have heard of, than such as we have seen ourselves. This maxim is still truer, when applied to men, than when speaking of the works of art, or of the marvels of nature.

There is no man that deferves our admiration, unless he be viewed at a certain distance. As soon as we can come up close enough to men, so as to difcern their little vanities and petty jealousies, and to diftinguish the inequalities of their minds, our admiration ceases. Did we but know the domestic history of Cæsar and Alexander, in as minute a detail as we are acquainted with that of the great men of our own age, the Greek and Roman Names would be far from inspiring us with the fame veneration as they do at prefent. I readily join iffue with that author, who fays, that the greatest enemies of the glory of heroes are their valet de chambres. Heroes have always an advantage in being known only thro' the channel of historians; the greatest part of whom are pleased to give us fuch ingenuous strokes and little anec-

Audita visis laudamus libentius. Pater. 1. 2.

dotes, as render illustrious men still more worthy of admiration; but they are very apt to wave whatever is capable of producing the contrary effect. So much for what relates to the generality of historians. As for those that are inclined to satire, 'tis true they make men fometimes more wicked than they have really been, but they very feldom represent men weaker. An historian may lay a stress on his abilities, he may even boaft of his probity, in relating the actions of a very great villain; but he debases himself, and becomes an insipid writer, if he attempts to make his actors mean ordinary fellows. It may be faid, that the tragic poet can suppress all the little foibles that are capable of difgracing his heroes. I grant it; but the auditor remembers and repeats them, when the hero has lived in a time fo bordering upon his own, that common tradition might have informed him of those very infirmities.

Besides, Melpomene likes to adorn her victims with crowns and fcepters; and the fovereign houses in our times are so connected one with another by intermarriages, that it would be impossible to exhibit at present upon the tragic stage, a prince that had reigned within a hundred years in any neighbouring kingdom, in whom the fovereign of the country where the piece was to be acted. would not find himself interested as a relation. The inconveniency hereof is obvious of itself. I approve therefore of the contrivance of those authors, who, when they have chosen for their subject any event, that has happened in Europe within rodens

the course of a century, have disguised their personages by the names of ancient Romans, or of Greek princes, whom no body is any longer re-'Tis impossible to exhibit on the stage, all that an historian can commit to writing. The stage is, as it were, a book that is defigned for the public perufal; wherefore the rules of decorum ought to be observed, and all other regards to be confidered in fuch pieces as are acted in public, with a much stricter severity than in the gravest history. When Monsieur Campistron attempted to bring on the stage the tragic adventure of Don Carles, eldeft fon to Philip II. King of Spain, he treated his subject by the name of Andronicus: But notwithstanding his having changed the names of his personages, the representation of this piece was a long time forbidden in the Spanish Netherlands.

ignorant, that the Greek poets I am not had no fuch delicacy. They have introduced upon the stage sovereigns lately deceased, and fometimes even princes that were living. But these poets had been educated in the republican spirit of Athens, whose aim it was always to render monarchy odious. The way to succeed therein, was to represent kings and princes of a very vicious character upon their stage, whereof the entertainments must have naturally had a greater effect upon the fensibility of the Greeks, than they can have influence on the imaginations of northern nations. Hence the Greek poets have fometimes disfigured the true character of fovereigns;

orestes upon the stage as a most unhappy person, and pursued by the suries; the historians mention this prince to have lived to a great age, and to have had a long and prosperous reign over his people.

There are likewise two of our neighbouring nations, who introduce upon the stage fovereigns deceased within a hundred years, or thereabouts. They exhibit there such tragic events as have happened within the space of a century in their own country. Perhaps this may be owing to their not having a just idea of the dignity of a tragic scene: perhaps it may proceed also from their having some touch of the Athenian policy in view. The Dutch tragedy, the subject whereof is the famous fiege of Leyden, which the Spaniards were obliged to raise in the commencement of the wars of the Low-Countries, and which, pursuant to the foundation of a citizen of that town, is acted there constantly every year, in the same month as that event happened; is stuffed intirely with maxims and fentences against kings and their ministers, fuch as might have prevailed at Rome, after the expulsion of the Tarquins. Never was there a Greek tragedian that endeavoured to render fovereigns fo odious, as my lord Rochefter has attempted in his tragedy of Valentinian.

Factum ejus a diis approbatum spatio vitæ & selicitate imperii apparuit, quippe vixit annis nonaginta, regnavit septuaginta. Paterculus, hist. 1. 1.

In the year 1574.

It was not certainly from any motive of this nature, that we ourselves brought upon our yet infant stage our reigning sovereigns. The French are celebrated all over the world, for having a natural respect for their princes; nay, which is still more, for loving them: wherefore it is easy to judge, by the character of those pieces, where the French poets have exhibited their reigning fovereigns, that their transgression proceeded merely from groffness and ignorance. A few months after the death of Henry IV. there was a tragedy acted at Paris, the subject whereof was the unhappy death of that prince. Lewis XIII, who reigned at that time, was represented as a personage of the piece, and from his own box he could fee himfelf acted on the stage, where the poet made him fay, that study was capable of killing him; that a book was apt to give him the head-ach; and that there was no other cure for him but the found of a drum; and feveral other pretty conceits of that kind, worthy of a fon of Alaricus or Athalaricus. But reason and reflection have rendered us since that time, the nicest and difficultest nation in Europe, with respect to the decorums of the theatre. Our poets cannot be mistaken with impunity in our days, in the choice of the time and place of their pieces.

Racine maintains, in his preface to Bajazet, whose tragic death was a recent event when he brought it upon the stage, that the remoteness of the place where the event has happened, can supply the distance of time; and that

we scarce make any difference between what has happened a thousand years ago, and what has been done at a thousand leagues distance. But I cannot close with his opinion. There is no danger of feeing a person that has lived a thousand years ago, but one may eafily meet with people who have lived in a country a thousand leagues off, whose recitals may prejudice the veneration with which our poets pretend to inspire us, for men that are dubbed heroes only by croffing the sea. Besides, the present intercourse between France and Constantinople is so considerable, that we are better acquainted with the customs and manners of the Turks by the verbal relations of fuch of our friends as have lived amongst them, than we are informed of the customs and manners of the Greeks and Romans by the narratives of deceased authors, of whom we cannot ask the favor of an explication, when they happen to be too concife or obscure. Wherefore a tragic poet cannot violate the general notion, which the public has of the customs and manners of foreign nations, without prejudicing the probability of his piece. Nevertheless, the rules of our stage, and the customs of our tragic fcenes, which require that women should have always a great share in the plot, and that the intrigues of love be treated agreably to our own manners, obstruct our conforming to the customs and manners of strange nations. True it is, that the defects arising from this impediment, are observed only by a small number of people, who VOL. I.

are learned enough to diftinguish them; but it falls out, that in order to make a shew of their erudition, they frequently exaggerate the importance of those defects; and there are but too many afterwards, who take a pleasure in repeating their criticisms. I shall only add one word more to this observation, which is, that except Bajazet, and the Earl of Essex, all those tragedies that have been written within these fourscore years, whose subject has been taken from the history of the two last centuries, are quite laid aside, and their very names buried in oblivion.

The definition which Aristotle gives of comedy, when he calls it an imitation of the ridicule of mankind, is sufficient to point out its proper subjects. As it inslicts no other punishment on vicious persons but ridicule, the design of it cannot consequently be to represent such actions, as deserve a severer chastisement. None ought to be arraigned before its tribunal, but such only as are culpable of slight saults with regard to society.



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CHAP. XXI.

Of the choice of comic subjects. Where their scenes are to be placed. And of the Roman comedies.

HAVE produced feveral reasons to evince, that tragic poets ought to place their scenes in times remote from that which we live in. Reafons of an opposite nature induce me to be of opinion, that the scene of comedy ought to be fixt in the very places and times, in which it is represented: that the subject thereof ought to be taken from ordinary events, and that its personages ought to resemble, in every respect, the people for whom it is written. Comedy has no occasion to raise its favorite personages on pedestals, fince its principal end is not to make us admire them, in order to render them more easily the object of pity: the most it aims at, is to give us a little uncafiness for them, arising from the crosses they meet with (which ought rather to be a fort of disappointments than real misfortunes), in order to give us more fatisfaction at feeing them happy at the unravelling of the piece. Its defign is, by making us laugh at the expence of ridiculous persons, to purge us of those faults it exposes, that we may become fitter for society. Comedy therefore cannot render the ridiculousness

of its personages too visible to the spectators, who whilst they discover with ease the ridicule of others, will still find it difficult enough to discern the ridicule that is within themselves.

Now we cannot distinguish nature so easily, when she appears in strange customs, manners, and apparel, as when she is clad, as it were, after our own fashion. The Spanish decorum, for example, being not so well known to us, as that of France, we are not so much shocked with the ridicule of a person that acts against it, as we should, were this personage to violate the laws of decency that are established in our own age and country. We should not be so much struck as we are, with the touches that describe the miser, were Harpago to exercise his niggardlines in a house managed according to the Italian occonomy.

We always distinguish human nature in the heroes of tragedies, whether their scenes be at Rome or at Sparta; by reason that tragedy is descriptive of great virtues and great vices. Now men of all countries and ages resemble one another more in great vices, than they do in ordinary practices and customs; in short, than in those vices and virtues whose pictures are drawn in comedy. Thus the personages of comedy ought to be cut out, as it were, after the fashion of that country, for which the comedy is written.

It will be objected, that Plautus and Terence have placed the scenes of the greatest part of their pieces in a strange country, with respect to

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the Romans, for whom they had composed their comedies. The plot of their pieces supposes the laws and customs of the Greeks. But if this reafon fuffices for an objection against my fentiment, it is not however strong enough to evince the contrary of what I have established. in answer to this objection, we need not be afraid to fay, that Plautus and Terence might have been mistaken. When they wrote their pieces, comedy was then in its infancy at Rome; whilft the Greeks by that time had furnished the stage with most excellent pieces. Plautus and Terence, who had no patterns in the Roman language to direct them, fell into a fervile imitation of the comedies of Menander, and of some other Greek poets; and thus acted Greek personages before Roman spectators. Those who transfplant any art whatever into their own country, generally conform too fervilely to the foreign practice thereof, and are guilty of the mistake of imitating at home the same originals which that art was accustomed to mimic where they first learnt it. But experience soon teaches us to change the object of imitation. Wherefore it was not long before the Roman poets found out, that their comedies would be much more agreable, were the scenes to be transferred to Rome, and the characters of that very people to be acted, who were to judge of their performances. This was done accordingly, and the comedy composed after the Roman manners was divided into feveral species. Horace, the K 3 most en'l'

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most judicious of poets, applauds such of his countrymen, as first introduced Roman personages into their comedies, and thus delivered the Roman stage from a kind of tyranny exercised over it by foreign personages.

Nil intentatum nostri liquere poetæ,
Nec minimum meruere decus vestigia Græca
Ausi deserere, & celebrare domestica fasta,
Vel qui prætextas, vel qui docuere togatas.
Hor. de art. poet.

Our Latin poets, eager after praise,
Have boldly ventur'd, and deserv'd the bays:
They left those paths, where all the Greeks have
gone,

And dar'd to show some actions of their own.

CREECH.

The Romans, in speaking of their dramatic poetry, have sometimes consounded the genus with the species. I think it incumbent upon me, to clear up this consussion, in order to render what I have still to say upon this subject, more easy to be understood.

The dramatic poetry of the Romans was at first divided into three sorts, which were afterwards subdivided into several species: The three sorts were tragedy, satire, and comedy.

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There were some whose manners and personages were intirely Greek, and were called Palliata, because they made use of Greek dresses in the representing of them. The tragedies, whose personages were Roman, had the name of Pratextata, or Pratexta, from the habit which people of distinction wore at Rome. The tragedy of that sort extant, which is the Ostavia, that goes under the name of Seneca, yet we know very well that the Romans had great numbers of them. Such were the Brutus that expelled the Tarquins, and the Decius, written by the poet Aceius.

The fatire was a kind of patteral poetry, which fome authors affert to have held a kind of middle rank between tragedy and comedy; which is almost all we know of it.

Comedy, in like manner as tragedy, was divided first into two species; the Greek or Palliata, and the Roman or Togata, by reason of the introducing plain citizens into the latter, whose dress was called toga. This we learn from Diometles an ancient author, who wrote during the time that the Roman empire still sub-sisted.

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The Roman comedy was sub-divided in its turn into four species; the Togata, properly so called, the Tabernaria, the Atellana, and the Mimus.

^{*} Togatæ fabulæ dicuntur quæ scriptæ sunt secundum ritus Es habitus hominum togatorum, id est, Romanorum. Diom. de Arte Gram. 1. 3. c. 4.

Apud Romanos Pratextata, Tabernaria, Atellana, Planipes. DIOMED. ib. cap. 4.

Pieces of the first fort were very serious, and admitted even of personages of distinction, for which reason they were sometimes called pratextata. The second were comedies of a less serious nature. They took their name from taberna, which strictly signified a place of rendezvous, proper for assembling persons of different conditions, whose characters were played off in those pieces.

The Atellana was a kind of piece very like the common Italian comedies; that is, those whose dialogues are not written. The actor therefore of the Atellana performed his part just as he pleased, and flourished it as his fancy directed. Livy, in giving the history of the progress of the Roman comedy, fays, that the Roman youth were not willing that this amusement should become a profession; for which reason they reserved it for themselves. Wherefore, adds Livy a, those, who were actors in the Atellana, kept their privilege of freemen, and might lift as foldiers, the fame as if they had never appeared on the stage. Feftus fays, that the spectators had not a right to make them unmask, as they could the other comedians b, who, 'tis well known, could not fometimes get off with only unmasking. All those comedians wore, when they acted, a particular

Eo institutum manet, ut actores Atellanarum nec tribu moveantur, & stipendia tanquam expertes artis ludicræ faciant. Liv. 7.

Atellani jus babent personam non ponere.

covering for the feet, which was called foccus.

The cothurnus was a fort of shoe or boot for those who acted in tragedies.

The Mimus refembled our farces, and the actors thereof performed always bare-foot. What a number of sentences, says Seneca , do we meet with in poets, which are not unbecoming the gravity of philosophers? Not to mention tragedies, nor the long-robed comedies (whereof the latter, by the severity of their manners, preserve a kind of middle rank between tragedy and comedy) let us go only to the Mimi, what a multitude of excellent maxims will occur to us in Publius Syrus, fitter for the buskin, than for barefooted actors? This Publius Syrus was a poet, who wrote mimic pieces, and was the rival of Laberius. Macrobius talks very much concerning their competition, in his Saturnalia. Diomedes b confirms what I have here advanced by faying, that the fourth fort is called planipedia, or bare-footed comedy, and by the Greeks, Mimos, because the actors come upon the stage bare-foot, not as the tragic actors with the cothur-

² Quam multa poetæ dicunt, quæ a philosophis aut dicta sunt aut dicenda? Non attingam tragicos aut togatas nostras. Habent enim hæc quoque aliquid severitatis, & sunt inter tragædias & comædias mediæ. Quantum disertissmorum versuum inter mimos jacet, quam multa Publii non excalceatis, sed cothurnatis dicenda sunt. Senec. ep. 8.

Duarta species est planipedia, Græce dicitur mimos, quòd actores planis pedibus proscenium introirent, non ut tragici actores cum cotburnis, neque ut comici cum soccis. DIOM. 1. 2. C. 7-1. 3. C. 4.

hus, or the actors of the other three forts of come-

We fee by the adventure which happened at the funeral of Verpalian, where Sucronius informs us, that the character of Vespasian was acted, purfuant to custom, in a mimic piece, that some of these pieces were according to the Roman manners. The avarice of this emperor was highly scandalous, notwithstanding his having frequently cracked feveral witty jokes upon it himself, whereof several have been handed down to our times a. Every body knows, for example, the piece of wit he made use of in squeezing some money out of a town, that wanted to expend a large fum in erecting him a statue. Gentlemen, said he to the deputies, Affetching out the palm of his hand, bere is the basis, whereon you must creet your statue. Favor Archimimus (words that express the name and profession of the actor that was to play the part of Velpalian) having asked the directors of the ceremony, how much the expence of his interment would come to; and hearing them anfwer, that it would amount to fome millions, he cried out, Gentlemen, let me have a hundred thoufand crowns, and you may throw my body into the river. We shall treat hereafter of the pantomimes, a kind of dumb comedians; but now let us return to our subject.

DION. 1. 66.

POETRY and PAINTING. 139

Our lyric and comic poets fell into the fame error as Plautus and Terence, when our tafte, improving under Malherbe and his fuccessors, became at length too nice to put up any longer with the old farces. Our comic poets endeavoured then to perfect their parts, as the other poets had completed theirs. These comic writers destitute of models, and perhaps of genius, finding that our heighbours, the Spaniards, were already provided with a rich stock of plays, they took it into their heads to copy the comedies of the Caffilians. Almost all our comic poets imitated them down to Moliere; who, after having strayed for some time, turned at length into the road, which Horace has judged to be the only good one. His latter comedies, except that which he wrote to counter-act Plautus, are all written in the French manners. I do not mention here the heroic comedies of Molière, because his design in compoling them was not to much to write comedies, as to draw up dramatic pieces, that might ferve to connect the diversions destined to forth those magnificent spectacles, with which Lewis XIV, entertained his court in his younger days; the memory of which diversions is still preserved. in foreign countries, as well as that of his conquests. The public, which, as soon as it gets into the right taffe, does not so easily quit it, has rejected forme time fince all fuch comedies, as are written in the foreign manners.

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In fact, unless a person has some knowledge of Spain and its inhabitants (a knowledge which a poet has no right to require of his spectators) he cannot see into the nature and design of the greatest part of the raillery of those pieces. How many spectators are there that do not understand a word of the jokes of Don Japhet? for instance, that which contains the reproach made by the Castilians, who pronounce well and distinctly, to the Portuguese, who pronounce very ill, and eat a part of their syllables: Ce sont les guenons qui parlent Portugais. They are apes that talk Portuguese.

We have had within these fourscore years, two different companies of Italian comedians established at Paris. These comedians have been obliged to speak French, since it is the language of those that pay them: but as the Italian pieces, which are not composed in our own manners, are incapable of amusing the public, the comedians here mentioned have found it also necessary to act fuch pieces, as are written in the French manners. The first English translation of Moliere's comedies was done literally from the original. Those who englished these pieces after-wards, have accommodated the French comedy to the English manners. They have changed the fcenes and the incidents, whereby they have rendered them more agreable to that nation. is what Mr. Wicherly did, when he formed of Moliere's Misanthrope, his Plain Dealer, whom he fupPOETRY and PAINTING. 141 supposes to be an Englishman, and bred to the sea.

Our first writers of operas have given into the fame errors, as our comic poets, by making too fervile a copy of the Italian opera from which we first borrowed this kind of spectacle. They never confidered, that the French tafte having been refined by the tragedies of Corneille and Racine, as also by Moliere's comedies, it confequently required more probability, regularity, and dignity in dramatic poems, than is commonly infifted upon on the other fide of the Alps. For this reason we can bear no longer to read the opera of Gilbertus, or abbot Perin's Pomona. These pieces, tho' written within these fixty-eight years, appear to us as Gothic poems composed five or fix generations ago. Quinault, who wrote for our Lyric theatre after the abovementioned authors, had no fooner composed two operas only, than he perceived that the perfonages of buffoons, which are fo effential to an Italian opera, were quite unfuitable to a French auditory. Theseus is the last opera in which Quinault has introduced buffoons, and the care he took to raise their character, shews he was then fensible, that these personages were as absurd in tragedies made for finging, as in those that are defigned for declamation.

'Tis not sufficient for the author of a comedy to place his scenes in the midst of the people that are to see it acted, he ought also to take care that his subject be adapted to common capa-

cities,

cities, fo that every body may, without difficulty. fee into the intricacy and unravelling of the plot. and understand what the personages aim at in their conversations. A comedy that is to dwell on the detail of a particular profession, whereof most people have but an incompetent knowledge, would have but a very indifferent prospect of success. We have seen a comedy in our days miscarry, because a person must have been some time at the bar to understand it. Those farces, whose constant subject is the course of life, which a particular class of debauched people perpetually lead, are as contrary to rule, as they are to decency and good manners. There is but a very small number of spectators, that have fufficiently frequented the company of the originals, whose copies are there exposed, so as to be able to judge whether the characters and events are treated with any resemblance of truth. One grows tired of bad company on the stage, as well as in private life; and we may very well apply to the authors of fuch pieces, what Boileau faid of Regnier the fatyric writer.



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CHAP. XXII.

Some remarks on pastoral poetry, and on the shepherds of ecloques.

HE fcenes of Bucolic poems ought always to be in the country, at least they should not be transferred from thence but for a very short time: for the following reason. 'Tis essential to a Bucolic poem to borrow of meadows, woods, trees, animals, and, in short, of all the objects that diversify the country, those metaphors, comparisons, and other figures, of which the stile of these poems is particularly formed. 'Tis therefore to be supposed, that the personages of pastoral poetry have these objects present to their fight. As the ground-work of this fort of picture ought always to be a landskip, therefore violent and fanguinary actions can never be the fubject of an eclogue. Personages that are tumultuously toft by furious and tragic passions, are supposed to be insensible of rural charms. It would be therefore intirely out of character to fix their attention on fuch objects as present themselves in the country, so as to draw from thence their figurative expressions. Does a General, who is going to give the enemy battle, reflect, whether the ground which he has occupied with his body of referve, be proper for building a country-house?

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I am not of opinion, that it is effentially necesfary for the personages of an ecloque to be in love. Since the Egyptian and Affyrian shepherds were the first astronomers, why should not the easiest and most curious parts of astronomy be a proper subject for Bucolic poetry? We have seen authors, who have treated this very subject by way of ecloque with universal applause. The first book of the Plurality of Worlds, which has been translated into fo many languages, is the best ecloque we have been entertained with these fifty years. The descriptions and images drawn by the personages are very suitable to the character of pastoral poetry, and among those images, there are feveral which Virgil himfelf would have willingly adopted.

I have observed, that tragic personages interest us always by the character of their passions, and by the importance of their adventures; but the case is quite different, with regard to the adventures and personages of eclogues. These personages, who should not be exposed to great dangers, nor fall into any missortunes that are really tragical and capable in their nature of deeply affecting us, ought, in my opinion, to be copied from what we behold in our own fields. The scenes of eclogues, as well as of comedies, should be placed in our own country, and their subject ought to be an imitation of such events as have happened to our countrymen.

'Tis true, our shepherds and peasants are so very coarse and clownish, that it would be impossible

possible to copy from them any fit personages for eclogues. But our peafants are not the only persons, that can borrow the figures of their discourse from the pleasures of the country. A young prince, who loses his way a hunting, and either by himself or with his friend talks of his passion, and borrows his images and comparisons from rural beauties, is an excellent personage for an idyllium. Fiction is supported by probability, and probability cannot fubfift in a work in which there are no other personages introduced, but such as whose character is intirely opposite to the natural original we have constantly before our eyes. For which reason I cannot approve of those whining shepherds, who are made to say such a deal of things fo marveloufly tender, and fo fublimely infipid in fome of our eclogues. These pretended shepherds are neither copied nor imitated from nature; they are a parcel of chimerical entities, and mere children of poets brains, who confult only their own imagination in forging them. They bear no manner of refemblance with our rustic inhabitants, and the shepherds of our times. These are unhappy peasants, whose fole occupation is to procure themselves, by the exercises of a laborious life, wherewithal to supply the preffing necessities of an ever indigent family. The roughness of the climate, under which we live, renders them gross and stupid, and the injuries of this same climate multiply their wants. Thus the languishing shepherds of our ecloques are not copied from nature; their kind of life. VOL. I. wherein

wherein they intermix the most delicate pleasures with their rural cares, and especially with the sollicitude of feeding their tender flocks, is far from

being the life of any of our peafants.

'Tis not with fuch fairies as thefe, that Virgil, and the other poets of antiquity, have peopled their delightful landskips; they have introduced into their eclogues, the shepherds and peafants of their own country and times, whose situation of life was fomewhat superior to those of latter ages. The shepherds of those days were free from fuch cares, as confume our poor peafants. The greatest part of those, who lived out in the country, were flaves, whom their mafters were as diligent to maintain, as a carrier to feed his horfe. The care of providing for the children of those slaves belonged to the master, whose property they were: In short, those shepherds had no manner of follicitude for their fubfiftence, the care of which was intirely committed to others. Thus being as much concerned about the necessaries of life, as the monks of a rich abbey, they were possessed of that ease of mind which was requifite for relishing those pleasures to which the foftness of their climate invited them. The brisk and ferene air of those countries rarefied their blood, and gave them a disposition for mufic, poetry, and other refined pleasures. veral of them were also born or bred in their mafter's house in town, who seldom begrudged them an education, which generally turned out to his profit; whether he had a mind to keep them for

for his own fervice, or to fell them for flaves. Even in our days, tho' the political state of those countries does not permit the peafants to live in the fame ease as they did formerly; and tho' they have not the same advantage of education; yet we find them susceptible of the impressions of pleasures, that are much above the reach of our peafants. The country fellows of some parts of Italy not only tend their flocks, but even go out to the plough with a guitar on their back. They likewise know how to fing their amours in extempore verses, which they accompany with the found of their instru-These they touch, if not with delicacy, at least with exactness; which they call improvifare. Vida, bishop of Alba, in the sixteenth century, a poet famous for the elegancy of his Latin verses, gives us a description of the peasants his countrymen and cotemporaries, not unlike that which Virgil has drawn of the personages of his ecloques.

Quin etiam agricolas ea fandi nota voluptas Exercet, dum læta seges, dum trudere gemmas Incipiunt vites, sitientiaque ætheris imbrem Prata bibunt, ridensque satis turgentibus agri. VIDA Art. Poet. l. 3.

Ev'n the rough hinds delight in such a strain, When the glad harvest waves with golden grain, And thirsty meadows drink the pearly rain,

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On the proud vine her purple gems appear,
The smiling sields rejoice, and bail the pregnant
year.
PITT.

Tho' our peasants are vastly heavier than those of Sicily and of some parts of the kingdom of Naples; tho' they have no knowledge, neither of guitar nor verse, yet our poets change our shepherds into fofter and more artful warblers; and form them into personages of a more subtle tenderness and delicacy of passion, than those of Gallus and Virgil. Our whining shepherds graze upon love's metaphysics; they talk of nothing else but love, and those of the least refinement amongst them, shew themselves capable of writing a commentary on that art, which Ovid professed at Rome under Augustus. Several of our pastoral songs, composed about fourscore years ago, when this kind of tafte obtained its greatest sway, are stuffed with these insipid fooleries. If there be fome few, that are written in the pure language of paffion, and whose authors invoked Apollo only to affift them in their rhyme; what vast numbers are there, that are full of a fophistical love, and void of any refemblance of nature? The authors of those songs, by attempting to feign fentiments, which were not their own, nor perhaps fit for their years, have metamorphofed themselves in their cold fits into imaginary shepherds. We feel through all their verses the frigid poet, colder than the oldest eunuch.

CHAP. XXIII.

Some remarks on epic poetry. Observation relating to the proper place and time of its subject.

S an epic poem is the most arduous work that French poetry can attempt, for the reasons which we shall give hereaster when treating of the genius of our language, and of the measure of our verses; it would be of very great importance to a poet, that would venture to engage in fo great an undertaking, to chuse a subject, wherein the general and particular interests are both united. 'Tis in vain for him to flatter himself with hopes of success, unless he entertains the French with the famous passages of their history, and amuses them with those personages and events, wherein they have already, in some measure, a national interest. But all the memorable pasfages of the history of France, are not equally interesting. We do not seem to concern ourselves very much but in facts, whose memory is yet recent. The rest seem to affect us only as a foreign history; and the more fo, as we have no established custom of perpetuating the remembrance of our happier days to posterity, by anniversary feafts and folemnities, nor of immortalizing the memory of our heroes, after the manner of the Greeks and Romans. How very few are there amongst

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amongst us, that concern themselves much about the events, which happened under Clouis, and the first race of our kings? In order to hit upon a subject capable of engaging deeply our attention, one ought not, methinks, to ascend higher

than the reign of Charles the VIIth.

True it is, that the same reasons which we have alledged to evince, that one ought not to take too recent an action for the subject of tragedy, prove likewise, that such an action ought not to be the subject of an epic poem. Let the poet therefore chuse his subject at a proportionable distance of time; that is, within a period which we have not yet lost sight of, and yet remote enough to give a just dignity and elevation to the characters, without being exposed to be belied by

any recent and vulgar afperfion.

Were we even to grant, that our customs, combats, feafts, ceremonies, and religion, could not furnish a poet with such agreable matter, as the subject of the Æneid, still it would not follow, that it were less necessary to borrow the subjects of Epic poems from our own history. It would be indeed an inconveniency; but such an inconveniency as would prevent a much greater one; to wit, the defect of a particular interest. But this is far from being our case. The pomp of a carrousel, and the events of a tournament are much nobler subjects in themselves, than the games represented at the tomb of Anchises, of which Virgil has drawn fo magnificent a picture. What fuperb descriptions would not this poet have made of

POETRY and PAINTING. of the furprizing effects of gun-powder, that chief spring of our present military operations? The miracles of our religion have a kind of marvellous fublime, superior to any thing we meet with in the fables of paganism. With what success has not Corneille treated them in Polieuctes, and Racine in his Athalia? If Sannazarius, Ariosto, and fome other poets are censured for their manner of handling the Christian religion; 'tis because they have not spoken of the sublime subject with a fuitable dignity and decorum; 'tis because they have blended the fables of paganism with the truths of our religion; in fine, 'tis because, as Boileau fays, they have foolishly idolatrized on Christian subjects. They are blamed for not having confidered, how unreasonable it is, to say nothing worse, to usurp the same liberties in treating of our religion, as Virgil might have taken, in speaking of the pagan superstition. Let those, who will not confent to make fuch a choice of an epic Subject, as has been here proposed, give the true reason of their refusal: 'tis because they fland in need of the affiftance of the poetry of the ancients, to give a warmth and fecundity to their vein; and therefore they chuse to treat of fuch subjects as have been handled by the Greek and Latin poets, rather than any modern subjects, where they cannot be fo eafily affifted with the poetry, style, and invention of the former. We

course of this work upon this very article.

shall have occasion to fay fomething more in the

CHAP. XXIV.

Of allegorical actions and personages, regard to painting.

UR subject leads us here naturally to treat of allegorical compositions and personages, whether in poetry or painting. Let us first speak

of allegories in painting,

Allegorical composition is of two forts. ther the painter introduces allegorical personages into an historical composition, that is, into the representation of an action, which is supposed to have really happened, fuch as the facrifice of Iphigenia; and this is called a mixt composition: or else he invents an action, known to have never really happened, and forms thereof an emblem, to express fome real event; and this is called a composition merely allegorical. Before we enlarge any further upon this subject, let us talk of allegorical personages.

Allegorical personages are such as have no real existence, but have been conceived and brought forth merely by the imagination of painters, from whom they have received a name, a body, and 'Tis thus that painters have formed personages of virtues and vices, kingdoms, provinces, cities, feafons, paffions, winds and rivers. France represented in the appearance of a woman; the river Tiber drawn in the figure of a man

reclining;

reclining; and calumny painted in the figure of

a fatyr, are all allegorical personages.

These allegorical personages are of two forts. The first are such as are of a long standing, and have made, as it were, their fortune in the world. Their appearance has been so frequent on so many stages, that every one that has the least tincture of learning, may know them immediately by their attributes. France, represented by a woman with a crown on her head, a scepter in her hand, and covered with a blue mantle, feeded with golden flowerde-luces; the Tiber, represented by the figure of a man reclining, with a she-wolf at his feet fuckling a couple of children, are allegorical perfonages of a very long standing, and known for fuch all over the world. They have acquired, as it were, a kind of city freedom among mankind. The fecond fort of allegorical perfonages, are those that are of a modern date, and fuch as are daily invented by painters, in order to express their They characterise them after their own fancy, and bestow such attributes upon them as they suppose will best contribute to render them eafy to be discerned.

I shall treat here only of the allegorical perfonages of the first fort, that is, of the ancient ones, or those of a long standing. Their younger brothers, as it were, which have iffued within these hundred years out of the brains of painters, are strangers and vagabonds, which do not so much as merit to be mentioned: They are a kind of cyphers, whereof no body has the key; and very

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few are defirous of having it. It will fuffice to observe, with respect to them, that their inventer generally makes a bad use of his abilities, in spending his time in the production of fuch idle beings. Those who are reckoned in our days to have been the greatest masters in painting, are not such as have given birth to the greatest number of allegorical personages. True it is, that Raphael has produced some of this fort; but this sage painter has employed them only in the decorations that ferve for a frame or prop to his pieces in the Signature apartment. He has even had the precaution to write the name of those allegorical perfonages under their figures a. Tho' Raphael was very capable of rendering them easy to be known, yet this precaution appears to have its utility; and it were even to be wished that he had carried his precaution fo far, as to give us an explication of the fymbols, with which he imbellishes them: For notwithstanding the inscription acquaints us with their names, still one finds it vastly difficult to guess at the value and merit of the emblematical attributes, wherewith they are adorned.

Let us return to the ancient allegorical personages, and see what use we are allowed to make of them in historical compositions. 'Tis the opinion of people of very good sense, that allegorical personages ought not to be introduced into these pieces but with great discretion; by reason that

^{*} Those allegorical figures have been ingraved by Monsieur Audran.

these compositions are designed to represent a real event, drawn just as it is supposed to have actually happened. They should not appear even on those occasions, wherein they are allowed to be introduced, but as escutcheons or attributes of principal and historical personages. Thus Harpocrates, the god of silence, or Minerva may be placed near a prince, to denote his discretion and prudence. These allegorical personages ought not, methinks, to be principal actors themselves. Personages known to be imaginary entities, and incapable of being actuated with passions like ours, can never interest us much in their adventures.

Besides, the resemblance of truth cannot be too strictly observed in painting, no more than in poetry. 'Tis in proportion to the exactness of this seeming truth, that we are more or less liable to be feduced by the imitation. But allegorical personages employed as actors in an historical composition, must naturally alter its probability. The picture in the gallery of Luxemburg, representing the arrival of Mary of Medicis at Versailles, is an historical composition. The painter intended therefore to represent the event agreably to truth. The queen lands from on board the Tuscan gal-The lords and ladies, that accompany or receive her, are easy to be distinguished. But the Nereids and Tritons, whom Rubens has represented founding their shells in the harbour, to express the joy with which this maritime town received the new queen, make, to my fancy at least, a very prepofterous appearance. As I am fensible that

that none of these marine Deities assisted at the ceremony; this siction destroys part of the essect, which the imitation would have produced in my mind. Rubens ought here, methinks, to have imbellished his harbour with ornaments more reconcileable to probability. Things that are invented, in order to render a subject more agreable, should always be consistent with its existence. The poet must not require a blind and implicit faith of his spectators, so as to desire them to submit with an unlimited credulity to whatever he says to them. Hear what Horace advises on this subject.

Fieta voluptatis causa, sint proxima veris,
Nec quodcumque volet, poscat sibi fabula credi.
Hor. de Art. Poet.

Keep to old tales; or if you must have new, Feign things coherent, that may look like true. CREECH.

I am likewise convinced, that the magnificent picture representing Mary of Medicis in child-bed, would be much more agreable, had Rubens, instead of the genius and other allegorical figures mixt in the action of the picture, introduced the women, that affisted at the queen's delivery. We should behold it with greater satisfaction if Rubens had exercised his poetry in representing some of them pleased, others transported with joy; some under a concern for the

the queen's pains, and others somewhat vexed to see a dauphin of France. Painters, 'tis true, are poets, but their poetry does not consist so much in inventing chimeras and extravagant conceits, as in imagining justly what passions and sentiments ought to be attributed to their personages, according to their character and supposed situation; as likewise in finding expressions proper for rendering those passions sensible, and in making us form a right conjecture of those sentiments. I do not recollect that either Raphael or Poussin have ever made that vicious use of allegorical personages, which I have attempted to censure here in this piece of Rubens.

But painters (some will say) have been in all ages in possession of a right to draw Tritons and Nereids in their pictures, notwithstanding these marine deities never had any real ex-

istence.

Pictoribus atque poetis Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas. Hor. de Art. Poet.

Poets and painters equally may dare,
In bold attempts they claim an equal share,
And may do any thing.

CREECH.

Why therefore should Rubens be censured for having introduced them into that piece, which represents the arrival of Mary of Medicis at Marseilles? Besides, the audity of those Divinities has a wonderful

derful effect in composition, amidst such a number of dressed figures, as history obliged him to

give place to in his picture.

My answer is, that this licence granted to painters and poets ought to be understood, as Horace himself explains it, Sed non ut placidis coeant immitia. That is, this licence ought not to go fo far, as to blend things incompatible in the same picture, such as the arrival of Mary of Medicis at Marseilles, and tritons sounding their shells in the harbour. This princess ought never to meet in the same place with tritons, were we even to suppose a pitturesque place, as Corneille insisted on our supposing a theatrical one. If Rubens had occasion for naked figures in order to display his ability in defigning and colouring, he might have introduced galley-flaves, affifting at the queen's landing, and have placed them in what attitude he liked best.

Not that my design is to contest the right which painters have acquired of drawing Sirens, Tritons, Nereids, Fauns, and the rest of the sabulous Deities, and noble chimeras, with which the imaginations of poets have peopled the waters and forests, and lavishly inriched all nature. My censure is not sounded on this, that there never were Sirens nor Nereids; but that they had been exploded, when the event happened, which gave rise to this discussion. I grant that there are historical compositions, where the Sirens and Tritons, like other Fabulous Divinities, may have a share in an action. Such are the historical compositions, which represent

reprefent the events that happened, while paganism subsisted, when these Divinities were generally supposed to have a real existence. But these fame Divinities ought not to partake of the action in such historical compositions, as represent events that have happened fince the extinction of paganism, and where they had lost that kind of existence, which the opinion of the vulgar had given them during fuch a long fuccession of ages. They cannot be introduced into the latter fort of compositions any otherwise than as allegorical figures and fymbols. Now we have already obferved, that allegorical personages ought never to have place in historical compositions, unless it be as fymbolical perfonages denoting the attributes of historical ones.

The spectator can easily comply with the opinion, which prevailed when the event represented by the painter or poet is supposed to have happened. Thus I consider Iris as an historical personage in the representation of the death of Dido. Venus and Vulcan are historical personages in the life of Æneas. We are accustomed to humour the supposition, that these Divinities were real beings in those times, because the people of those days actually believed their existence. The painter therefore, that represents the adventures of a Greek or Roman hero, may introduce all the Deities as principal personages. He has a right to imbellish his compositions as his fancy dictates, with Tritons and Sirens. I have no objection, for my part, against his system; nay, I

have already observed, that those books which form the occupation of our earliest years, and the probability there is in seeing an hero succoured by the gods he worshipped, incline us to humour the siction. By dint of hearing the amours of Jupiter, and the passions of the other gods repeated frequently during our infancy, we fall into a habit of looking upon them as beings which heretofore existed, and were subject to the same passions as we are ourselves. When we read the history of the battle of Pharsalia, 'tis only by restlection that we distinguish the kind of existence, which thundering Jove had in those days, from that of Cæsar and Pompey.

But these Divinities change their nature, as it were, and become mere allegorical personages in the representation of events, which have happened in an age wherein the system of paganism was exploded. When they take place in these events, as real personages, I like to compare them to the patron saints of such as were formerly fond of devotional pictures; saints, whom our old painters used to represent in sigures, that had more devotion in them than good sense, without any regard to probability or chronology. Thus they used to make St. Jerome assist at the Lord's supper, and St. Francis at the crucifixion. But this vicious custom has been long ago banished into our country villages.

After having treated of allegorical personages, 'tis proper we return to allegorical compositions. An allegorical composition is the representation of an imaginary or sictitious action, contrived in or-

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der to exhibit one or several marvelous events, which the painter is unwilling to treat according to the rules of historical truth. The painters employ these compositions pretty nearly for the same use, as the Ægyptians did their hieroglyphic figures, that is, in order to expose sensibly to our view, some general truth of morality.

There are two forts of allegorical composi-The first are merely allegorical, because they admit into their composition none but fymbolical personages, the offspring of painters and poets brains. Of this fort are the two pictures of Corregio, painted in water colors, which are to be feen in the king's cabinet. In one of them the painter has represented man tyrannized by his passions; and in the other he expresses, in a fymbolical manner, the triumph of virtue over the passions. The second fort are those, in which the painter mixes historical and allegorical perfonages together. Thus the apotheofis of Henry IV. and the accession of Mary of Medicis to the Regency, represented in that piece which is at the bottom of the gallery of Luxemburg, are a mixt composition. The action of the picture is fictitious, and is a type or figure of the decree of Parliament, by which the Regency was conferred on the queen; but the painter has rendered it a mixt composition, by introducing Henry the IVth, and feveral other historical personages.

Painters very rarely succeed in mere allegorical compositions, by reason that it is almost impossible for them to convey a distinct knowledge of Vol. I. M their

their subject in works of that kind, or to place all their ideas within the reach of the most fensible spectators. Much less are they capable of touching the heart, which is very little inclinable to relent for the fake of chimerical personages, in whatever fituation they are represented. The mere allegorical composition ought not therefore to be employ'd but upon a very urgent necessity, to help the painter out of some difficulty, from which he cannot extricate himself by the ordinary In this kind of composition there are only a fmall number of figures allowed, and thefe cannot be too eafily diffinguished. If a person does not comprehend this composition easily, he will throw it aside as mere fustian and nonsense; for there is nonlense in painting as well as in poetry.

I cannot recollect more than one composition merely allegorical, that can be cited as a model, and which even Poussin and Raphael (if I may be allowed to judge of their fentiments by their works), would have been willing to have adopted. 'Tis impossible to imagine any thing more compleat in its kind than this idea, fo elegant in its fimplicity, and fo fublime by its agreement with the place for which it was defigned. This famous composition was the invention of the late prince of Conde a, a prince of as bright a conception, and as lively an imagination, as any person in his time. Painters very rarely forceed.

compositions, by reason trac it is HENRY Julius. .. medi 101 sid.

The prince here mentioned, caused the history of his father, commonly known in Europe by the name of the Great Condè, to be painted in the gallery of Chantilly. There was one difficulty which lay in his way in the execution of his project. The hero in his youth had been engaged in the interests of the enemies of our government, and had performed part of his great exploits whilft he bore arms against his country. It might be therefore naturally expected, that there should be no parade made of those atchievements in the gallery of Chantilly. On the other hand, some of those very actions, as his fuccouring the town of Cambray, and his retreat from before Arras, were fuch illustrious feats of war, that it must have been a great mortification to a fon fo fond of his father's glory, to suppress them in a kind of temple which he was going to erect to the memory of this hero. The ancients would have faid, that piety itself had inspired him with the method of perpetuating the memory of those great actions, whilst he made a flew of concealing them. He ordered therefore Clio, the historical muse, an allegorical but well-known personage, to be drawn with a book in her hand on the back of which there was the following Title, The Life of Prince Conde. With another hand she was tearing some leaves out of the book, which, as fast as she tore, she flung upon the ground. On the scattered leaves one might read, The relief of Cambray, the succour of Valenciennes, the retreat from before Arras, in short, the title of almost all the great actions of M 2 Prince

Prince Condè during his stay in the Spanish Netherlands; actions wherein every thing was commendable, but the cause in favor of which he performed them. Unfortunately this piece was not executed pursuant to so ingenious and so simple an idea. The prince, who had conceived so noble a design, shewed on this occasion an excess of complaisance for the art, by giving the painter leave to alter the elegance and simplicity of his thought, by sigures, which add only to the composition of the piece, without making it say any more than what had been expressed already in so sublime a manner.

The allegorical compositions, which we have distinguished by the name of mixt ones, are of much greater use than such as are merely allegorical. Though their action be sictitious, as well as that of compositions merely allegorical, nevertheless, as some of their personages happen to be historical, the meaning of those sictions may be rendered intelligible to every body, so as to become capable of instructing and engaging us.

Painters find this fecond fort of allegorical compositions of great service, either when they have a mind to express a great many things, which they cannot render intelligible in an historical composition; or when they want to represent in one single piece several actions, whereof each should naturally seem to demand a separate picture. We have several instances of this kind in the galleries of Luxemburg and Versailles. Here Rubens and Le Brun have sound means to represent, by the help

help of those mixt fictions, several things which were thought impossible to be expressed in colors. They exhibit frequently in one piece, such events, as an historian would take several pages to relate. As for instance:

In the year 1672 France declared war against the Dutch. The Spaniards, who by the treaties fubfifting between the two nations were forbidden to interfere in the quarrel, supplied the Dutch notwithftanding with private fuccours. These fuccours however proved but a very weak obstruction to the rapidity of the king's conquests. The Spaniards at length, intending to oppose the king's progress more effectually, pulled off the mask, and declared war against France. But their public affiftance was attended with as little fuccess as their private fuccours. In spite of all their efforts, the king took Maestricht, and afterwards carried the feat of war into the Spanish Netherlands, where he took, every campaign, a number of ftrong towns, till the peace at length put a stop to his conquests. This is the subject which Le Brun undertook to represent, a subject which seemed to fall more within the province of poetry than of painting; however he executed the piece in the following manner: making a salading to E.

The king appears in a triumphal chariot, led by victory, and drawn by rapid coursers. This chariot overturns, as it goes along, a number of astonished figures of towns and rivers, which formed the frontiers of the Dutch; each of which figures is known directly, either by its coat of

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arms, or by its other attributes. This is the true picture of what really happened in that war, when the very conquerors themselves were surprized at their success. A woman who represents Spain, and is easily distinguished by her Lion and other attributes, attempts to stop the king's chariot, by laying hold of the reins, but instead of the reins she only catches the traces; the chariot she intended to stop, drags her along, and the mask she had on, falls to the ground in this unsuccessful struggle.

It would be unnecessary to take a great deal of pains to convince painters, that it is in their power to make sometimes a good use of allegorical compositions and personages: They are but too inclinable of themselves to employ allegory to excess in all forts of subjects, even in those that are least susceptible of such imbellishments. But the sault of being over fond of making a show of the brightness of one's imagination, which is commonly called wit, is general to all mankind, who are frequently led astray thereby, even in professions of a much graver nature than painting. Nothing makes one say, and commit so many silly things, as the desire of appearing witty.

But confining myself within the limits of painting, I may venture to affirm, that there is nothing which estranges good painters so much from the true end of their art, and leads them into so many preposterous absurdities, as the desire of acquiring applause by the subtlety of their imagination, that is, by their wit. Instead of sticking to the imi-

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tation of the passions, they chuse to let their capricious imagination ramble, and forge a number of chimera's, the mysterious allegory whereof, is much obscurer than Sphinx's enigmatical questions. Inflead of speaking to us in the language of the passions, understood by every body, they address us in a language of their own inventing, whereof the expressions, though proportioned to the vivacity of their own imagination, are not adapted to the capacity of the rest of mankind. Thus all the personages of an allegorical picture are frequently mute with regard to the spectators, whose imagination happens not to be upon an equal degree of elevation with that of the painter. This mysterious signification is placed on fuch an eminence, that it is out of every body's reach. I have already taken notice, that pictures ought not to be riddles, and that the end and defign of painting is not to exercise our imagination, by prefenting it with intricate subjects to unravel. Its aim is to move us, wherefore the subjects of its pieces cannot be too intelligible.

We meet with feveral scraps of painting in the gallery of Verfailles, the meaning whereof being wrapt up too mysteriously, escapes the most fubtle penetration, and furpasses the ablest instruction. Every body is acquainted with the principal actions of the life of the late king, which forms the fubject of all those pieces; and the curious are moreover affifted here by the inscriptions put over the principal subjects. And yet there remains an infinite number of allegories and fymbols, which even the most learned are incapable They have been even reduced to of unfolding. the necessity of laying books on the tables of this magnificent portico, to explain and decypher, as it were, these mysterious allegories. The same may be faid of the gallery of Luxemburg. Perfons that are perfectly well acquainted with the particulars of the life of Mary of Medicis, and even fuch as are most knowing in mythology and emblems, cannot comprehend one half of Rubens's thoughts. Perhaps they would not be able to guess at even one quarter of what this too ingenious painter meant, were it not for the a explication of those pictures, which subsisted as yet by the affiftance of a recent tradition, when Monsieur Felibien committed it first to writing, and inserted it in his Discourses on the lives of the painters b.

People of all countries, and especially the French, are soon tired with searching a painter's meaning, who chuses always to keep it concealed. The pictures of the gallery of Luxemburg, whose subject is gazed on with the greatest pleasure, are those whose composition is merely historical; such as the queen's marriage and coronation. The power of truth is such, that imitations and sictions never have greater success, than when they

^{*}This explication was renewed, with additions by Monsieur Maureau de Mautour, in a treatise published in the year 1704. at the time that the duke of Mantua lodged at the palace of Luxemburg, when all Paris crowded to see this prince, and the sine gallery of this palace. Not long afterwards, it was ingraved.

b Том. II. р. 198.

swerve from it least. After contemplating those pictures, with regard to art, we look at them with the fame attention, as we should lend to the recitals of a cotemporary of Mary of Medicis. Every one finds fomething that hits his particular tafte in pictures, where the painter has represented an historical point in its full truth; that is, without any alteration of its historical probability. One person makes his remarks on the dresses of those times, which are never disagreable when drawn by an artist, who knows how to adapt them properly to his personages, and to set them off in their drapery with as much grace as their air will admit of. Another examines the features and countenances of the illustrious persons. The good or evil which history records of them, had inspired him long fince with a curiofity of being acquainted with their physiognomies. Another takes notice of the order and arrangement of an affembly. In short, that which strikes every body most in the galleries of Luxemburg and Versailles, is not the allegories interspersed thro' most of the pictures, but the expression of the passions; where there is more real poetry than in all the emblems that have been hitherto invented.

Such is the expression which draws every body's eyes towards the countenance of Mary of Medicis in child-bed. One may distinctly perceive the sense of joy she feels in having brought forth a dauphin, amidst the sensible marks of that pain, to which Eve and her semale posterity were condemned. In sine, whilst 'tis universally allowed,

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that these galleries, which are judged to be two of the richest porticos in Europe, abound with beauties, admirable for their defign and coloring, and that the composition of their pictures is most exquifitely elegant; every body would be pleafed, if those painters had not filled them with such a number of figures incapable of speaking to us, and with so many actions that have no power of engaging us. Now, as Vitruvius very fenfibly observes, Tis not sufficient that our eyes be pleased with the coloring and defign of a picture; our understanding ought also to find its account. The artist therefore ought to chuse such a subject as can be easily understood, and handle it in such a manner as to render it interesting to us. He adds, That be fets no value upon pittures, whose fubjects are not drawn in imitation of some truth? This passage will exempt me from treating of sigures that are commonly called grotefque.

Painters ought to employ their allegories in devotional pictures with a much greater referve than in profane pieces. They may indeed, in such subjects as do not represent the mysteries and miracles of our religion, make use of an allegorical composition, the action whereof shall be expressive of some truth, that cannot be represented otherwise either in painting or sculpture. I agree therefore to let

Neque enim pictura probari debent, qua non sunt similes veritati, nec si facta sunt elegantes ab arte, ideo de his debet statim judicari, nisi argumentationis certas habuerint rationes, sine offensionibus explicatas. VITRUV. 1. 7. C. 5.

them draw faith and hope supporting a dying perfon, and religion in deep affliction at the feet of a deceased prelate. But I am of opinion, that artists, who treat of the miracles and dogmas of our religion, are allowed no kind of allegorical composition. They may, at the most, introduce into their action, (which ought always to be an imitation of historical truth) some of those allegorical figures, that are agreable to the subject; such as, for instance, faith drawn by the side of a saint who has operated a miracle.

The facts, whereon our religion is built, and the doctrine it delivers us, are fubjects in which the painter's imagination has no liberty to fport. These facred truths, on which we should not even think without humility and terror, ought not to be painted with fo much wit; nor represented under the emblem of an ingenious allegory. Much lefs is it allowable to borrow personages and fictions from fables to represent these verities. Michael Angelo was univerfally blamed, for having mixt the fictions of heathen poetry with the revealed articles of the last judgment, in the reprefentation he has drawn thereof on the bottom wall of the chappel of Sixtus the IVth. Rubens, methinks, has committed a much greater fault than that of Michael Angelo, in drawing, as he has done, the great altar-piece of the Dominicans of Antwerp. This great poet expresses there too ingeniously, by means of an allegorical composition, the merit of the intercession of saints, by whose

whose prayers, sinners obtain frequently time and means to appeare the divine vengeance.

Christ advances from betwixt the other two perfons of the Trinity, as if he were going to execute the sentence of damnation, which he had just before pronounced against the world, figured by a globe placed at the bottom of the picture. He holds a thunder-bolt in his hand, in the attitude of a fabulous Jove, and feems just ready to dart it against the world. The virgin Mary, and several faints placed near to Christ intercede for the world, without feeming to prevail on him to fufpend his fury. But to come to the defign of the picture, and to its agreement with the place where it was to be exposed, St. Dominic covers the world with his mantle and rofary. Methinks, I fee too great a shew of art and wit in the reprefentation of fo awful a subject. Inspired writers might indeed make use of parables, in order to explain more fensibly the truths, which the Deity revealed thro' their mouths. God was pleased to inspire them with the very figures, which they were to employ, and with the application they were to make of them. But it is honor enough for our painters, to be admitted to give an historical representation of such mysterious events as can be exhibited to the fight. They are not allowed to invent so many fictions, and to use them as their fancy suggests, in exposing the like subjects. What I have faid with respect to painters, is equally applicable, methinks, to poets; nor do I approve

prove of Sannazarius's poem on the Virgin's child-birth, nor of the visions of Ariosto, any more than of the composition, employed by Rubens to represent the merit of the intercession of saints.

Some will object here, that I am for reducing painters to the condition of meer historians, without reflecting that invention and poetry are absolutely effential to painting. They will charge me with attempting to extinguish that fire of imagination in painters, (whereby they merit fometimes the appellation of divine artists) in order to confine them to the functions of a scrupulous annalift. But I answer, that the enthusiasm which constitutes painters and poets, does not consist in the invention of allegorical mysteries, but in the talent of inriching their compositions with all the imbellishments which the probability of the fubject will admit of, as well as in giving life to their personages by the expressing of the passions. Such is the poetry of Raphael, fuch of Pouffin, fuch of Sueur; and fuch frequently that of Le Brun and Rubens.

'Tis not necessary to invent new subjects, nor to create new personages, in order to attain to the reputation of a poet of an exalted rapture. The name of a poet is acquired by giving the action treated of, a capacity of moving the passions; which is effected by forming a right judgment of the sentiments suitable to personages, as supposed in a particular situation; and in drawing from one's own fund, such strokes as are properest for expressing

pressing justly these sentiments. This is what distinguishes a poet from an historian, who ought not to imbellish his narrative with circumstances drawn from his imagination, nor invent situations that may render his events more interesting; who is even seldom allowed to exercise his genius in lending suitable sentiments of his own production to his personages. The discourses, which the great Corneille lends to Cæsar on the death of Pompey, are a better proof of the secundity of his vein, and of the sublimity of his imagination, than the invention of the allegories of the prologue of the golden sleece.

The invention of those touches, which nature uses in expressing the passions, requires a juster and more fertile imagination, than the devising of emblematical figures. One may produce this fort of symbols eternally, by the help of two or three books, which are inexhaustible funds for these little toys; whereas a person must have a fertile imagination, conducted by a wise and judicious understanding, to succeed in the expressing of the passions, and in drawing a true picture

of their fymptoms.

But the advocates for wit will be apt to fay, that there must be certainly more merit in inventing things that were never thought of, than in copying nature, as my painter does, who is supposed to excel in the expression of the passions. Whereto I reply, that it is necessary to know something more than to make a servile copy of nature (tho' this is knowing a vast deal)

in order to give each paffion its fuitable character. and to express justly the sentiments of all the perfonages of a picture. 'Tis necessary to know how to copy nature, in a manner, without feeing it. 'Tis necessary to be able to form a just idea of its motions under circumstances that one has no experimental knowledge of. Can a painter be faid to have nature in view, who copies a fedate and tranquil model, when his bufiness is to draw a head, on which the symptoms of love ought to appear amidst the fury and tumult of jealoufy? One fees some part of nature in his model, but there is no appearance at all of that which is of the greatest importance, with refpect to the subject designed to be represented. We fee the fubject which the passion should have animated, but we do not perceive it in the situation to which the paffion reduced it; and 'tis in this very fituation it ought to be painted. The painter ought also to apply to the head whatsoever is generally mentioned in books, with regard to the effect the passions have on the countenance, and concerning the marks they are known by. All the expreffions ought to have fomething of the character of the head of a personage represented in the agitation of a particular passion. The imagination therefore of the artist ought to supply whatever is most difficult with respect to the expression, unless he happens to have in his shop a much completer model of a comedian than Baron .

A famous French comedian.

CHAP. XXV.

Of allegorical personages and actions, with regard to poetry.

E come now to treat of the use, which may be made in poetry, of allegorical personages and actions. The allegorical personages employed in poetry are of two sorts; one

perfect, and the other imperfect.

The perfect allegorical perfonages are such as have been intirely produced by poetry, who has given them a body and soul, and has rendered them capable of all human sentiments and actions. Tis thus poets have made personages of victory, wisdom, glory; and, in short, of all those things which painters, as we have observed, convert into personages in their pictures.

The imperfect allegorical personages are beings that really exist, on which poetry bestows the faculties of thinking and speaking, which they have not; but without giving them a perfect existence like ours. Thus poetry forms imperfect allegorical personages, when she lends sentiments to the woods and rivers; in short, when she makes all the inanimate beings think and speak; or when raising animals above their sphere, she bestows more reason upon them than they really have, and an articulate voice, which they want. The latter allegorical personages are

the greatest ornament of poetry, who never appears with so majestic a pomp, as when she animates and gives speech to nature. 'Tis in this consists the sublimity of the psalm, When Israel came out of Ægypt, and of several others, with which some people of taste are as much affected, as with the sinest passages of Homer and Virgil. But these impersect personages are not proper for a part in the action of a poem, unless it be that of an apologue or moral sable. They can only come in as spectators, to take part in the actions of other personages, in the same manner as the chorus's used to share in the tragedies of the ancients.

I apprehend these allegorical personages may be treated in poetry, as we have handled them in painting. They ought not to act one of the principal parts; but they should only intervene, either as attributes of the principal personages, or in order to express more nobly, by the help of siction, that which would appear low and trivial in a simple expression. 'Tis for this reason Virgil makes a personage of Fame in his Æneid. Though 'tis observable, that this poet introduces but a very small number of such personages in his works, and I must own I have never heard Lucan commended, for having made a more frequent use of them.

The reader will reflect here of himself, that Venus, Cupid, Mars, and the other heathen Divinities, are historical personages in the Æneid. The events described in this poem, happened at Vol. I.

a time, when the generality of mankind were perfuaded of their existence. These Deities are also historical personages in the poems of such modern writers, as chuse their scenes and actors from the times of paganism. They may therefore, when treating of fuch subjects, employ those Divinities as principal actors; but let them take care they do not confound them with fuch perfonages, as Discord, Fame, and others, which even in those days were only allegorical subjects. As for poets who treat of actions, that have not happened among the heathens, they ought not to employ the fabulous Deities, except as allegorical personages. Wherefore they should not let Minerva, Cupid, or even Jupiter himself, act a principal character.

With regard to the allegorical actions, poets ought never to use them but with great discretion. They may be employed with fuccess in fables and other pieces defigned to instruct and amuse the mind, where the poet speaks in his own name, and can make the application himfelf of the lessons he intends to give us. 'Tis by the help of allegorical actions, that feveral poets have conveyed agreable truths to us, which they could not have exposed unaffifted by this fiction. The conversations which fables suppose between brutes are allegorical actions; and fables are some of the most agreable productions of poetry. I cannot think, that an allegorical action is a proper subject for dramatic poetry, whose defign is to move us by the imitation of human passions.

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As the author does not speak to us directly in this fort of poem, and consequently cannot so well explain what he means by his allegory, we should be frequently exposed to the danger of reading it without being able to comprehend his idea. One must have a very extraordinary capacity, to discover always justly the application we ought to make of an allegory. My opinion therefore is, that these actions ought to be left to such poets as use narratives, and not to be em-

ployed by dramatic writers.

Besides, it is impossible for a piece, whose subject is an allegorical action, to interest us very much. Those which writers of approved wit and talents have hazarded in this kind, have not fucceeded fo well as others, where they have been dispofed to be less ingenious, and to treat historically their fubject. The luftre reflected by a metaphorical action, the delicacy of thought it fuggefts, and the fineness of turn with which a person applies his allegory to the follies of men; in a word, all the graceful imbellishments that a bright wit can draw from fuch a fiction, are all out of their place, when introduced upon the stage. The pedestal, we may fay, is not made for the statue. Our heart requires truth even in fiction itself; and when it is presented with an allegorical action, it cannot determine itself, (if I be allowed this expression) to enter into the fentiments of those chimerical perfonages. It confiders them as fymbols and enigmas, that envelop some precepts of morality, or fatyrical strokes, which properly belong to the N 2 iurisdiction

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jurisdiction of the mind. Now a theatrical piece, were it to speak only to the mind, would never be capable of engaging our attention during the whole performance. We may therefore address dramatic poets in the following words of Lactantius. A know that poetic licence bath its bounds, beyond which you are not permitted to carry your sittion. A poet's art consists in making a good representation of things that might have really happened, and in imbellishing them with neat and elegant images. But to invent a chimerical action, and to form personages of the same kind as the action, is to act rather the part of an impostor, than of a poet.

I am not ignorant, that the personages of several comedies of Aristophanes, for instance, those of the Birds, and of the chorus's of the Clouds, are intirely allegorical. But it is not difficult to guess at the reasons, which induced Aristophanes to treat his subjects thus, when we know that this poet's aim was to expose on the stage the most considerable persons of the republic of Athens; and especially those who had the greatest share in the war of Peloponnesus. The learned are all agreed, that this poet frequently alludes in these comedies to the different events of that war, or to some other adventures, whereof it had been

Progredi singendo liceat: cum officium poetæ in eo sit, ut ea quæ verè geri potuerunt, in alias species obliquis sigurationibus cum decore aliquo conversa traducat. Totum autem, quod referas, singere, id est ineptum esse & mendacem potius quam poetam. LACT.

the occasion. Aristophanes, who had a more formidable set of men to deal with than Socrates, could not mask his personages too much, nor too artfully disguise his subjects. Wherefore an allegorical action and personages were more proper for his purpose than ordinary ones. Besides, his three last comedies (I mean according to the order they are now disposed in,) have a rational and probable action for their subject. The French were mistaken, as well as other nations, with regard to the nature of the drama, when sirst they began to write dramatic pieces worthy of notice.

They imagined at that time, that allegorical actions might be the fubjects of comedy. There is a piece yet extant, which was exhibited at the nuptials between Philibert Emmanuel, duke of Savoy, and the fifter of our king Henry the IId. the action whereof is purely allegorical. Paris appeared there in the quality of a parent of three daughters, which he wanted to dispose of in marriage; and these three daughters were the three principal parts of Paris; to wit, the univerfity, city, and fuburbs, of which the poet had formed his personages. But either reason or instinct has cured us thoroughly of this pernicious tafte. 'Tis true fome poets have endeavoured of late years to renew it, but they have luckily miscarried in the attempt. Allegorical actions therefore are fuitable only to the prologues of operas, which are intended to serve as a kind of preface to the tragedy, and to point out the application of its moral. Monsieur Quinault has N 3 shewn.

fhewn us how to treat these allegorical actions, and to apply their allusions to such events, as are recent at the time when the prologues are represented.

C H A P. XXVI.

That the subjects of painters are not exhausted. Examples drawn from the pictures of Christ's crucifixion.

SOME are apt to complain of the inconveniences, which the painters and poets of our days lye under, by having all their subjects preoccupied by their predecessors. Even these artists themselves frequently make the same complaint, tho', methinks, very unjustly. A little reflection will be sufficient to shew, that the excuse alledged by the present artists, of being straightened for want of subjects, ought not to be admitted, when we can prove, that they are sometimes censured for want of invention, that is, for having nothing new, even in their new productions. There is so great a variety in nature, that she can always furnish fresh subjects to those that have any tolerable genius.

A man of genius views and considers nature, as imitable by his art, with a far different eye from those that have no genius. He discovers an infinite

nite diversity between those very objects, which to the eyes of other men appear the fame, and he knows fo well how to render this diversity difcernible in his imitation, that the most thread-bare fubject affumes an air of novelty under his pen, or pencil. A great painter has an endless stock of different joys and forrows, which he has the art of diversifying by the ages, complexions, characters of nations and of particular people, and likewise by a thousand other methods. As a picture represents only one instant of an action, a painter of any genius lays hold of fome inflant untouched by his predecessors, and imbellishes it with circumstances drawn from his own imagination, which give it the air of a new fubject. Now it is the invention of these circumstances, that constitutes the character of a poetic painter. What prodigious numbers of pictures have we had in all ages of the crucifixion of our Saviour? Nevertheless, artists endowed with genius have not perceived, that this subject has been yet exhaufted. They have constantly contrived to imbellish it with new touches of poetry, which feem notwithstanding so well adapted to the subject, that one is even furprized, why the first painter, who studied the composition of a crucifixion, did not lay hold of those very ideas.

Such is the picture of Rubens, which is feen on the great altar of the Franciscans at Antwerp. Christ appears dead betwixt the two thieves, who have not yet expired. The good thief looks up to heaven with a confidence grounded on the words of Christ; a confidence that is even visible amidst the tortures of his execution. Rubens, without placing the devils on the fide of the bad thief, purfuant to the practice of feveral of his predecesfors, has rendered him, notwithstanding, a lively object of horror. For this purpose, he made use of a circumstance of the execution of this wretch, which the gospel takes notice of, where it says, that his bones were broken, in order to haften his death. One may perceive by the livid contusion of his leg, that the executioner had already ftruck him with an iron bar, which he holds in his hand. The impression of a great blow obliges a person naturally to contract his body with a violent motion. The bad thief raises himself therefore on the gibbet, and in the effort caused by his pain, he tears off the wounded leg, by forcing the head of the nail which held his foot to the fatal tree. The head of the nail appears loaded with the hideous spoils it carried off, by lacerating the flesh, through which it passed. Rubens, who was so great a master of imposing on the fight by the magic of his chiaro-scuro, represents the body of the thief projecting itself in the struggle from the corner of the picture, where the flesh of this body is the truest, that ever same from the hands of that famous colorist. The head of this malefactor is drawn in profile: and his mouth, with its enormous gaping, which is much better reprefented in this fituation; his eyes with their inverted balls, whereof there appears only the white streaked with red and swoln veins; and, in fine, the

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the violent action of the muscles of the face, all together, would make a person imagine he is listening to the hideous cries with which he rends the air. Behind the cross appears a crowd of spectators, who give it a kind of prominence, whilst they seem sunk so deeply themselves into the picture, that one would scarce believe that all these

figures are drawn on the same surface.

From the time of Rubens down to Covpel, the fubject of the crucifixion has been frequently handled. Nevertheless the latter painter has given an air of novelty to his composition. His piece represents the moment, in which nature was convulsed with horror at the death of Christ; that moment, when the fun was eclipfed by the interpofition of the moon, and the dead rose out of their sepulchres. On one fide of the piece you see a group of men feized with terror mixt with aftonishment, at the fight of the strange confusion the heavens are thrown into, on which they feem to fix intirely their looks and attention. Their terror forms a contrast with a fear mixt with horror, with which fome other spectators are struck; from amidst whom a dead body rifes suddenly out of its grave. This thought, fo agreable to the fituation of the personages, and which shews the different accidents of the fame passion, is carried even to the fublime; but it appears fo natural, at the same time, that every one would be apt to imagine, it would have occurred to himfelf had he treated the fame subject. Does not the Bible, of all books the most universally read and known, inform

inform us, that nature shook with horror at the death of Christ, and that the dead rose out of their tombs? We should naturally say: How was it possible for any one single crucifix to have been drawn, wherein those terrible accidents were not displayed, accidents so capable of producing fo furprizing an effect? And yet Pouffin introduces into his picture of the crucifixion a dead body rifing out of its fepulchre, without drawing from this apparition the same poetic touch, as Monsieur Coypel has done. But 'tis the natural character of fuch fublime inventions as are the fole product of genius, to appear fo closely connected with the fubject, as to make us imagine, they ought to have been the first ideas, that should have offered themselves to artists, who have handled this subject. "Tis in vain to labor and " fweat, fays Horace, in fearch of fuch happy in-" ventions, unless we are endowed with a genius " equal to that of the poet, whose natural turn " and fimplicity we attempt to imitate.

Speret idem, sudet multum frustraque laboret
Ausus idem.

I'll take a common theme, and yet excel,
Tho, any man may hope to write as well;
Yet let him try, and he shall sweat in vain,
Idle his labor, fruitless prove the pain.

CREECH.

inform

HOTERS IS IS THE TRUDECK. THE PORT OF THE DIVING.

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La Fontaine's genius supplies him, in the composition of his fables, with an infinite number of
pretty touches, which appear so natural and so
proper for the subject, that the reader is apt immediately to imagine they would have occurred as
easily to himself, had he attempted to throw the
same apologue into metre. This very thought
has long since induced several poets to imitate
La Fontaine; but amongst the several copies extant of that kind, there are none but what fall
infinitely short of the original.

C H A P. XXVII.

That poetic subjects are not exhausted. And that there may be several new characters introduced into comedy.

WHAT has been just now observed, with regard to painting, is equally applicable to poetry. A poet of any genius, far from pretending to say he can find no new subjects in nature, will not, I dare venture to affirm, so much as think any one subject exhausted. That penetration, which inseparably attends a man of genius, discovers new faces to him, even in those subjects which are vulgarly esteemed the most trite; for a genius is sure to conduct every one

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in their labor by a particular road, as I shall explain more at large in the fecond part of this work. Wherefore poets, directed each by a particular genius, meet one another fo very feldom, that one may, generally speaking, affirm they never meet at all. Corneille and Racine have treated the same subject, and formed each of them a tragedy of Berenice; and yet they purfued fuch different roads, that there was no danger of their meeting. Nothing is more different from the plan and character of Corneille's tragedy. than the plan and character of that of Racine. The comedies composed by Moliere, when he had attained to his full maturity of perfection, resemble those of Terence, only inasmuch as both are excellent pieces in their kind, tho' their beauties are extremely different.

Artists born with a genius, do not take their models from the works of their predecessors, but from nature itself; and nature is infinitely more fertile of different subjects, than the genius of artists is varied. Besides, 'tis not every subject that is within the reach of one fingle person's eye: So far from that, he discovers only those which are fuited to his talents, and for which he perceives he has a capacity and disposition. As his genius does not furnish him with such strong ideas on other subjects, they appear of course ungrateful to him. Another poet will consider them as happy and agreable fubjects, because he happens to have a different kind of genius. 'Tis thus to to conduct every one

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that Corneille and Racine discovered subjects suitable to their talents, and treated them each according to his peculiar character. Were there to be another tragic poet, of as great a strength of genius as they, he would soon find subjects that have escaped them, and would be able to write in a taste intirely different from that of those two eminent poets. Thus Cicero observes, with regard to some illustrious dramatic poets of Greece and Rome, that they were almost equal in success, tho without any resemblance in their writings.

Subjects, that are yet untouched, escape our notice, because we have not a sufficient genius to discover them; notwithstanding we frequently read the history in which they are mentioned: but those very subjects would strike a poet's imagination, had he a proper genius to treat them. Hence the subject of Andromache, which had made no impression on Corneille, struck Racine, when he attained to a high degree of persection in poetry. The subject of Iphigenia in Tauris, which had escaped Racine, will probably strike some new author. One may apply to the sub-

Atque id primum in poetis cerni licet, quibus est proxima cognatio cum oratoribus, quam sint inter se Pacuvius, Ennius, Acciusque dissimiles, quam apud Græcos Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, quanquam omnibus par pænè laus in dissimili genere scribendi tribuatur. Cic. de Orat. 1. 111.

jects of tragedy, what Phædrus says with regard to fables :

Materia tanta abundat copia, Labori faber ut desit, non fabro labor.

The fubject is so copious, that there is rather a want of workmen for the employment, than of employment for workmen.

True it is (fome will fay), that tragic poets can never want subjects; they, that can introduce personages into an action in whatever fort of character they please, and who can embellish also their fable with extraordinary incidents invented iust as their fancy suggests. 'Tis sufficient for tragic poets to draw fine heads; and, in order to render them afterwards more capable of engaging our admiration, they may deviate in fome measure from the proportions which nature commonly obferves. But a comic poet must exhibit portraits, in which we can discover those with whom we live and converse. We despise the characters he gives his perfonages, if they be not natural; and Moliere, and fome of his fuccessors, have been before-hand with us, in feizing all the real characters in nature. A tragic poet can invent new characters; but a comic poet can only copy the real characters of men; confequently the fubjects of comedy are exhaufted.

In answer to this objection I may venture to affirm, that Moliere and his imitators have not ^a Phædr. 1. 4. fab. 25.

brought

brought upon the stage one fourth part of the characters proper for forming the subject of comedy. The case is pretty near the same, with regard to the minds and characters of men, as with respect to their countenances. Man's face is composed of the same parts, of two eyes, one mouth, &c. and yet mens countenances are all different, because they are differently composed. Now the characters of men are not only differently composed, but moreover tis not always the same parts, that is, the same vices, the same virtues, and the same projects, that enter into the composition of their character. Wherefore the characters of men ought to have a much greater difference and variety than mens faces.

The word character implies a mixture, a composition of several failings and virtues. Now in this mixture some particular vice predominates, if the character be vicious; and some virtue or another prevails, if the character be virtuous. Thus the different characters of men are so diversified by this mixture of faults, vices, virtues, and of natural parts differently combined, that two characters perfectly alike are a much greater phenomenon in nature, than two saces of a complete resemblance.

Now every well drawn character makes a good personage in comedy. Every such character can really act, with success, a part more or less long, more or less important. Why should love be a privileged passion, and the only one that can surnish a variety of characters, by means of the di-

versity,

versity, which age, fex, and profession cause in the fentiments of lovers? Cannot the character of a mifer be likewise varied by age, by passions, as also by profession? These characters, if well drawn, would never be tirefome, because they exist in nature; and a plain and ingenuous description of nature is always agreable. If therefore any of our comic writers complain of their being unable to bring new characters upon the stage, it must proceed from their not being clearfighted enough to read into nature, to unravel distinctly the different principles of the same actions. and to fee how the fame principles operate differently upon every individual. It is very far from being true, that all the various subjects of human ridicule have been reduced to comedy.

But where are those new characters (some will say) that have not as yet made their appearance on the stage? To which I answer, that I would attempt to point out some of them, had I a genius like that of Terence or Moliere; but I happen to be of the number of those, of whom Boileau a speaks in the following verses:

La nature féconde en bizarres portraits

Dans chaque ame est marquée à de différens

traits,

Un geste la decouvre, un rien la fait parôitre, Mais tout mortel n'a pas des yeux pour la connoitre.

Art of Poetry, Canto 3

Nature

Nature in various figures does abound,

And in each mind are diff rent humours found:

A glance, a touch, discovers to the wise;

But every man has not discerning eyes.

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To have a distinct and just idea of what can form a character, requires a capacity of discerning three or four touches that belong to a man's peculiar character, amongst twenty or thirty things which he says or does in common with the rest of mankind. One must collect these touches, and pursuing the study of one's model, extract, as it were, from his actions and discourses such strokes, as are properest for conveying a knowledge of the portrait.

These are the strokes, which, separated from such indifferent things, as all men say and do pretty near alike, and afterwards drawn and collected together, constitute what we call a character, and give it, in a manner, its theatrical finishing. All men appear alike to limited capacities: to people of a better understanding they all seem different: But every man is an original to a poet born with a comic genius.

The portraits of ordinary painters are all placed in one attitude, and have intirely the same air; by reason that those painters are not clear-sighted enough, to discern the dissernce of each person's natural air, so as to discriminate thereby his portrait. But an able painter knows how to give every one the air and attitude that belongs to him by virtue of his conformation.

Vol. I. O A

As he has the talent of difcerning people's natural temper and disposition, which is always different; the countenance and action therefore of the perfons he draws, are constantly varied. Experience also helps us very much to find out the real difference between objects, which, at first fight, appear the fame. Those who look at negroes the first time, imagine that their countenances are all alike; but by feeing them often they discover as great a variety in their faces as in those Hence Moliere found more oriof white men. ginals in the world, when he came to the age of fifty, than when he was only forty years old. I come back now to my proposition, which is, that it does not follow that all the subjects of comedy are exhausted; because persons, who have no genius for comedy, nor have studied man in the light, in which comedy ought to study him, are not able to point out new fubjects.

The generality therefore of mankind are capable indeed of discovering a character, when it has received its due form, and has been theatrically finished; but there are none, except such as are born with a genius for comedy, that are capable of discerning this character, as long as the particular strokes that are necessary for the designing of it remain drowned and confused in an infinite variety of discourses and actions, which decency, mode, custom, profession, and interest set all men upon saying and doing pretty near with the same air, and in so uniform a manner, that their character dis-

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discloses itself imperceptibly only. 'Tis they alone can inform us, what character would refult from those strokes, were they to be detached from indifferent actions and discourses, and drawn altogether, as it were, into one body. In fine, to difcern the difference of characters in nature, is properly the work of invention. Wherefore a man, that is born without a comic genius, is incapable of diftinguishing those characters; in the same manner as a person born without a genius for painting is unable to difcern, which are the most proper objects in nature for painting. How many things, fays Cicero a, do painters observe in a particular incident of light, that are imperceptible to our eyes?

I conclude therefore, that those painters and poets, whom a disposition of genius, and not a mercenary view of fubfiftence, has called to the arts they profess, will always be able to discover new subjects in nature. Their predecessors, if I be allowed this figurative expression, have left them a great deal more marble in the quarry, than they had dug out themselves for their own

ufe.

[·] Quam multa vident pictores in umbris, & in eminentia, qua nos non videmus. Cic. Acad. Quæft. 1. 4.



CHAP. XXVIII.

Of poetic probability.

HE first rule which painters and poets ought to observe in the treating of their subjects, is to insert nothing that is contrary to probability, or seeming truth. Men can hardly be touched with the representation of an event, that is glaringly impossible. Poets, as well as painters, that treat historical facts, are allowed to suppress some part of truth. They both may add to those facts some incident of their own invention, pursuant to what Vida observes.

Fieta potes multa addere veris.

VIDA poet. 1. 2.

Unnumbered fictions may with truths be join'd.
PITT.

Poets and painters, that act in this manner, are not treated as liars. Fiction is never esteemed a lie, except in works that are supposed to contain nothing but historical facts. That which would be deemed a lie in the history of Charles the VIIth, is not esteemed such in the poem of the Maid of Orleans. Thus a poet that has seigned an honorable adventure in order to raise the glory of his hero, is not an impostor, tho' an historian

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historian would be reckoned as such, were he to take the same liberty. A poet escapes censure, if his invention be not downright contrary to probability; and if the fact he invents be such as might have possibly happened. Let us first treat

of probability with regard to poetry.

A probable fact is that which bears a possibility in the circumstances, under which it is said to have happened. That which is impossible under those circumstances, can have no appearance of probability. I do not understand here, by the word impossible, that which exceeds human force, but which appears impossible, granting even all the suppositions that can be made by the poet. As he has a right to infift upon our admitting that to be possible, which appeared so at the time he fixes his scene; and whither, in some measure, he transfers his readers; we cannot therefore, for example, charge him with breaking through the rules of probability, by fupposing that Diana carries off Iphigenia, and conveys her to Tauris, just at the very moment this princess was going to be facrificed. The event was possible, according to the Greek Theology of those times.

This being premised, let those, who have more considence and resolution than I am master of, attempt to fix the limits between the probable and the marvelous, with relation to each kind of poetry; with respect to the time in which the event is supposed to have happened; and finally, with regard to the greater or lesser credulity of those, for whom the poem is composed. To me it appears a very difficult

task to settle those boundaries. On the one side, men are not moved with fuch events, as cease to be probable, by reason of their being too marvelous: on the other hand, events that are fo very probable, as to cease to be marvelous, are hardly capable of engaging their attention. The same thing happens with respect to events, as with regard to fentiments. Those fentiments that have nothing marvelous, either in the grandeur and fitness of the thought, or in the clearness of the conception, or in the justness of the expression; appear flat and trivial. Such a thought as that, (one is apt to fay) might have occurred to any body. On the other hand, fentiments, that have too much of the marvelous, appear false and The fentiments, which Du Rier overstrained. lends to Scevola, in the tragedy of that name, where he makes him fay of the people of Rome to Porsenna, who intended to famish them,

Se nourrira d'un bras, & combattra de l'autre. Will feed with one, with t'other arm will fight.

Becomes as ridiculous by the exaggeration it contains, as any bombastic touch in Ariosto.

Tis therefore, in my opinion, a thing impossible to convey the art of reconciling the probable and the marvelous. This is attainable only by such as are born great poets. For them it is, that nature has reserved the privilege of uniting the marvelous and the probable, without confounding the rights and limits of either.

either. 'Tis the masterly art of making this alliance, that forms the characteristic of poets of the first class, and distinguishes such as Virgil from the herd of barren versifiers, and of extravagant poets. 'Tis this likewise, which discriminates those illustrious poets, from flat and insipid authors, and from writers of romances and chivalry, such as Amadis of Gaul, and many others. The latter performances are not indeed destitute of the marvelous; on the contrary, they are quite stuffed with it; but their sictions are so very improbable, and the events so wonderful as even to surfeit those readers whose judgments are formed, and who have any acquaintance with solid and prudent writers.

A poem, that violates the rules of probability. is so much the more defective, as the transgression must be obvious to every one's censure. have a tragedy of Monsieur Quinault, intitled, The pretended Tiberinus; where the poet supposes, that Tiberinus, king of Alba, having died in a certain expedition, one of his generals conceals the knowledge of the king's death from the troops, lest they should be thereby disheartened. In order to be the more able to keep it secret, he made his fon personate king Tiberinus, in which he was favoured by the perfect refemblance there was between the king and Agrippa; for this is the fon's name, who was to pass for Tiberinus. ther likewise had it whispered about, in order to give a more plaufible appearance to the imposture. that the deceased king had put Agrippa secretly to 04 death.

death. The whole kingdom of Alba fwallowed the cheat during the space of a year, and the unravelling of the piece, which furnishes each act with continued scenes of wonders, becomes very interesting to the spectator: And yet this tragedy will never be ranked amongst those, that are an honor to the French stage. It only affects us by furprize, and we disavow our own emotion, when we come to reflect on the extravagance of the fupposition, on which all the marvelous incidents of the tragedy are founded. One can hardly expect any pleasure in the repetition of a piece which supposes so perfect a resemblance, even with regard to the mind, between king Tiberinus and Agrippa; that Agrippa's mistress, after having conversed a long time with him, continues to take him for Tiberinus.

I acknowledge notwithstanding, that a poem absolutely without the marvelous, would be more disagreable to me, than a poem sounded on an unlikely supposition. And here I join issue with Boileau, who prefers Cyrano's Travels thro' the world of the Moon, to the barren poems of Motin and Cotin.

As there is nothing that prejudices more the probability of a fact, than the certain knowledge which the spectator may chance to have, of its having happened differently from the poet's recital; those poets, methinks, whose works positively contradict the most authentic historical truths, must certainly hurt the probability of their fictions. I am not ignorant, that falsity is some-

times

regulate our assent, with respect to sacts, by their metaphysical likelihood, or by the notion of their possibility, but by mere historical probability. We do not examine into what was most likely to happen, but into what has been attested by proper witnesses, and related by historians; and then 'tis their relation, and not the likelihood of the thing, that determines our assent. The deposition therefore of historians being the rule of our assent with regard to sacts, whatever contradicts this deposition, cannot have the appearance of probability. Now as truth is the soul of history, so probability is the soul of poetry.

CHAP. XXIX.

Whether tragic poets be obliged to conform to the positive accounts of Geography, History, and Chronology. Remarks with respect to this subject, on some tragedies of Corneille and Racine.

AM therefore of opinion, that a tragic poet acts contrary to his art, when he transgresses, in too gross a manner, against history, chronology, or geography, by advancing facts that are contradicted by these sciences. The more the

public is convinced of the contrary of what he afferts, the more his error prejudices his performance. When faults of this nature are known, they are very feldom forgiven by the public, nor are they ever intirely excused, without diminishing somewhat of the reputation and esteem of the work.

A poet ought not therefore to make Cyrus fave the life of Tomyris, nor represent Cæsar as the murderer of Brutus. He should also, methinks, shew the same respect to received and established fables, as he does to history. The accounts we receive from sabulous history, of its Gods and heroes, have acquired a right of passing for truth in poems, nor are we any longer intitled to contradict its relations. A poet moreover should not, without a very great necessity, make any alteration in such accounts as we receive from history and sable, of the events, manners, and customs of those countries where he places his scenes.

What has been here faid, must not be supposed to extend to facts of small importance, and confequently very little known. It would be a piece of pedantry, for example, to find fault with Monsieur Racine for making Narcissus say in Britannicus, that Locusta, the samous poisoner in Nero's time, had made a slave expire at her feet, to try the activity of the poison which she had prepared for Britannicus; because historians relate, that this experiment had been made upon a swine. The circumstance changed here by the poet, is not considerable enough to induce him to observe

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it, at the expence of the pathetic, which the life of a man facrificed for the fake of an experiment, throws into the recital, and of the trouble and difficulty there would be in relating this incident, as it is delivered by historians. But I should not condemn a person, for censuring several things in this piece of Racine, which are positively contradicted by the accounts we have of the manners of those times, and by what we know relating to the history of Nero.

Junia Calvina, Britannicus's mistress, of whose history the poet gives us some account in his preface, (where he is extreamly fearful left we should confound her with Iunia Silana) was not at Rome at the time of the death of Britannicus. 'Tis impossible therefore, she could have been a personage of the action he has brought upon the stage. Junia Calvina was exiled towards the close of the reign of Claudius, for having been guilty of incest with her brother; and Nero did not recal her from her banishment, till he thought proper to shew some examples of clemency, in order to reconcile the minds of the people, irritated by the murder of his mother. Besides, the character which Racine has bestowed upon this Junia Calvina, is contradicted by history. He affects to represent her as a virtuous young lady, and makes her fay frequently, in poetic expressions, that she has not as yet any knowledge or experience of the world.

Tacitus, who must have seen Junia Calvina, since she was living under the reign of Vespasian, gives

gives her, in the history of Claudius2, the character of an impudent woman. Before Claudius was married to Agrippina, and upwards of feven years before the death of Britannicus, she had been married to Lucius Vitellius, brother to Vitellius, who was afterwards made emperor. Seneca, in his ingenious fatire on the death of the emperor Claudius, talks of Junia Calvina, as if he really believed her culpable of an inceftuous commerce with her own brother, which had been the cause of her exile under the reign of that prince. Racine cites a scrap of the passage of Seneca, in fuch a manner, as one would imagine he had not read it intire. He gives us indeed the expression, by which Seneca describes her as the pleasantest girl of her time; Festivissimam omnium puellarum: but he omits what Seneca adds, that Junia Calvina had the air and appearance of a Venus, tho' her brother chose to make her his Juno. Now every body knows, that Juno was both fifter and wife to Jupiter. Racine supposes, in his preface, that it was Junia Calvina's age only, which hindered her being received as a veftal; fince he attempts to render her reception into their college probable, by making the people of Rome dispense with her age; a supposition highly ridiculous with respect to those times, when the people had no longer the power of enacting laws. But not to mention that Iulia was of too advanced an age to be received as a veftal, there were feveral other reasons, which rendered her being ad-

mitted into their college impossible. In fine, this fact is refuted by all the accounts we have from history, of the life of Junia Calvina. I think it also wrong in Racine to raise Narcissus from the dead, (a personage, whose fame in the Roman history rivals that of the most illustrious confuls) to make him one of the actors of his piece. Tacitus informs us, that Agrippina obliged this celebrated freed-man to make away with himself a few

days after Nero commenced his reign.

There are feveral other errors of the same nature in Britannicus, but a great many more in the tragedy of Berenice. Racine makes Titus enlarge the territories of this princess. He mentions her dominions in above twenty different places, whereas she was never mistress of either kingdom or principality. She had the title of queen, either because she had been married to crowned heads, or by reason of her being a king's daughter; for the custom of giving the title of queens to kings daughters, was received in feveral countries, and even in France. fupposes, that his Antiochus, that very Antiochus who was wounded in a battle fought between the armies of Otho and Vitellius, was king of Comagena under the reign of Titus; notwithstanding we are informed by history, that the father of this unfortunate prince was the last king of Comagena. He had been suspected, under the reign of Vespasian, the father and predecessor of Titus, of carrying on a fecret correspondence with the Parthians; wherefore he was forced to make his escape,

escape, he and his children, (of whom Racine's Antiochus was one) into Parthia, to avoid falling into the hands of Cesennius Pætus, who had orders to fecure them. Pætus took possession of Comagena, which was from that time afterwards reduced into a province of the empire. we find, that upon the accession of Titus to the throne, Antiochus Epiphanes had taken shelter among the Parthians; confequently there was no fuch thing at that time as a king of Comagena. Our poet transgresses also against truth, in the following lines of Paulinus, whom Titus charges, as his intimate friend; to tell him his opinion with regard to the marriage of Berenice, where he makes him fay,

Des fers de Claudius Felix encore flétri De deux reines, seigneur, devenir le mari, Et s' il faut jusque 'au bout que je vous obéisse, Ces deux reines etoient du sang de Bérénice.

Felix in fetters bound by dire command
Of Claudius, liv'd to taste the nuptial joys
With two fair queens, and since I must proceed,
Those queens, great sir, of Berenice's blood.

This Felix, so well known from the histories of Tacitus and Josephus, was never married to more than one queen or lady of blood royal, which was Drusilla. 'Tis true, she was of the blood of Berenice, for she was her own sister.

I should

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I should not therefore tax a person with pedantry, because of his finding fault with Racine for committing such a number of mistakes, contrary to so authentic and well known a history, as that of the sirst emperors of the Romans; as likewise for falling into several geographical errors, which he might have easily avoided. Such is the mistake he makes Mithridates guilty of, when exposing his project of passing over into Italy, and of surprizing Rome, he says to his sons,

Doutez-vous que l'Euxin ne me porte en deux jours?

Aux lieux où le Danube y vient finir son cours?

And doubt you, then, that e'er two days expire, The winds will waft us o'er the Euxine main To Danube's mouth?

They might very well doubt it, because the thing was absolutely impossible, says a prince, who has commanded armies on the banks of the Danube, and who, like Mithridates, has preserved the reputation of a Great general in the different vicissitudes of fortune. Mithridates's sleet, to set out from the neighbourhood of Asaph, and from the streights of Cassa, where Racine sixes the scene of his piece, had a passage of near three hundred leagues to make, before they could reach the banks of the Danube. Vessels that keep together in one sleet, and have no other method of advancing but

by oars and fails, could never expect to be less than eight or ten days in this voyage. Here Racine, without any danger of stripping Mithridates's enterprize of the marvelous, might have given his army six months march, before they could pretend to reach the city of Rome, from whence they were seven hundred leagues distant. But the verse where Mithridates says,

Je vous rends dans trois mois aux pieds du Capitole.

In three months time I'll lead my martial bands
To Rome's great Capitol,

must naturally shock those, that have any know-ledge of the distance of places. Tho' the Greek and Roman armies marched much more expeditiously than ours, yet certainly there never were troops that could, for the space of three months, without halting, advance eight leagues a day; especially were they to march thro' difficult passes, or thro' an enemy's, or at least thro' a suspected country, such as the most part of those provinces were, thro' which Mithridates was to conduct his army. These sorts of criticisms are generally handed about upon the first appearance of a new piece; and they are frequently improved, to the prejudice of the poet, much more than he deserves.

Corneille is frequently guilty of the same inaccuracy and neglect as Racine. I shall produce only only one example, from the speech of Nicomedes to Flaminius, ambassador from the Romans to king Prusias his father. Nicomedes after having reminded the ambassador, that Hannibal had gained the battle of Trasimene over Flaminius, advises him likewise not to forget,

Qu'autrefois ce grand homme, Commença par son pere a triompher de Rome.

That by his father's former great defeat This hero began first to conquer Rome.

But Titus Quintus Flaminius, he whom Nicomedes speaks to, and who had forced Hannibal to have recourse to poison, was not the son of that Flaminius, who loft the battle of Trasimene; so far from that, they were of quite different tribes and families. Flaminius defeated at Trasimene was a plebeian; and the ambassador from the republic to Prusias, and author of Hannibal's death, was a patrician. Besides, the victory of Trasimene was not the first success which Hannibal obtained in Italy: It had been preceded by the battle of Trebia, and by the famous battle of Ticinum both won by the renowned Carthaginian General, before he defeated Flaminius near the lake of Perugia. I cannot imagine how Corneille fell into this miftake of confounding the two Flaminius's; especially as the learned had made this objection long ago VOL. I. against

against the author of the lives of illustrious men attributed to Aurelius Victor.

'Tis true, the Greek tragedians have sometimes committed the like mistakes; but this is no argument to justify the faults of modern writers; especially as the art might be well supposed to have been carried in our times to a higher degree of perfection. Besides, the Greek tragedians have been always cenfured for fuch errors, as prejudice the likelihood of their suppositions, by contradicting known and authentic truths. Paterculus' charges those poets with being guilty of a very gross error, only for giving the name of Thessaly to that part of Greece, which was afterwards fo called, at a time when it had not as yet received that denomination. In fact, this is a mistake which is fo much the more shocking in the tragic poet, as he makes a person guilty of it, who lived at a time when it was impossible for him to have fallen into fuch an error. We may corroborate our fentiment further, with what Ariftotle b has observed, in respect to the historical

proba-

Quo nomine mirari convenit eos, qui Iliaca componentes tempora, de ea regione ut Thessalia commemorant; quod cum alii saciant tragici, frequentissimè faciunt, quibus minime id concedendum est, nihil enim sub persona poetæ, sed omnia sub eorum, qui illo tempore vixerunt, dixerunt. Paterc. 1. 1. hist.

Τ Τὰς τε λόγας μὴ συνίς ασθαι ἐκ μεςῶν ἀλόγων, ἀλλὰ μάλις α μὰν μηθὲν ἔχειν ἄλογον ἐι δὲ μὴ, ἔξω τἔ μυθεύμαλος, ὥσσερ Ὁ Οἰδιπας τὸ μὴ ἐιδέναι πῶς Λάῖος ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ μὴ ἐν τῷ δgάμαλι, ὥσπαρ ἐν Ἡλέκλραοὶ τὰ Πύθια ἀπαγ/ἐλλονλες. Απιςτ. Poet. cap. 24.

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probability, which ought to be observed in poems. He blames those who pretend, that an exactness in conforming to this probability, is an useless affectation; and he even condemns Sophocles for causing it to be proclaimed in the tragedy of Electra, that Orestes had killed himself at the Pythian games; whereas those games were not instituted, till several centuries after the time of Orestes. But it is a much easier matter for poets to treat this scrupulous exactness as pedantry, than to acquire a proper share of knowledge for preventing them from falling into such mistakes, as that with which Aristotle reproaches Sophocles.

CHAP. XXX.

Of probability in painting; and of the regard which painters ought to have for received traditions.

Probability, in painting, is of two forts, poetic and mechanic. The latter confifts in representing nothing but what is possible, according to the laws of motion, and of optics.

This mechanic probability consists in attributing no other effects to light, but such as it would have naturally produced: for instance, it should not throw its rays on those bodies, which it is hindered from falling upon by the interposition of

It consists in not deviating fensibly from the natural proportion of bodies, in not bestowing a greater force and weight upon them. than they are naturally supposed to have. A painter would act contrary to those laws, were he to make a person, whom he represents in an attitude that leaves him master of one half only of his ftrength, to lift up fuch a weight, as requires the whole collected force of a man to move. Much less should he draw a figure with a huge piece of a pillar, or fome other excessive burthen on his back; fuch as even Hercules's shoulders would find too heavy. But were we to suppose (some will say) these figures to be good or evil genius's, whose power far furpasses all human abilities; the thing is then reconcileable to probability. To which I answer, that the painter in that supposition may have reason indeed on his side; but he must expect the fenses against him. Now which ought he to endeavour chiefly to please? But I shall not enter here upon what regards more particularly this mechanic probability, fince the special rules thereof are to be found in books that treat of the art of painting.

The poetic probability consists in giving the personages such passions as suit them best, according to their age, dignity, temperament, and to the interest they are supposed to have in the action. It consists in observing what the Italians call it costume, that is, in conforming to what we know of the particular manners, dresses, buildings, and arms of the people we intend to represent. In sine,

it consists in giving the personages of a picture their known face and character, (if they have one) whether this character be copied from portraits, or whether it intirely owes its origin to the imagination. We shall presently have occasion to fpeak more at large of these known characters.

Tho' all the spectators in a picture become so many actors, yet the vivacity of their action ought to be in proportion only to the interest they have in the event at which they are present. Thus a foldier, who affifts at the facrifice of Iphigenia, ought to be moved but not near fo much as the brother of the victim. A woman that is present at the judgment of Susanna, and who neither by her air or lineaments, has the appearance of being her fifter or mother ought not to shew the same symptoms of grief as a very near relation. A young man ought to demonstrate a greater eagerness in his applause. than a person far advanced in years. Even the attention to the same thing, differs in proportion to the difference of age. A young man should appear quite wrape up in a spectacle, which a person of experience ought to behold with a very indifferent attention. A spectator, who is favoured with the countenance of a man of parts, ought not to gaze on a thing with fuch an air of admiration, as one that is characterifed with a stupid physiognomy. A king's furprize should not be like that of a vulger fellow. One who hears a thing at fome diffaree, ought not to be in the thene attitude as a person that is just by. A man

of spirit and vivacity, does not listen with the fame posture and air, as an hypochondriac perfon. The refpect and attention which the court of a Persian Sophi pays their master, must be expressed by such outward demonstrations, as would be deemed unfuitable to the respect of the people of Rome for their confuls. The dread of a flave is unlike that of a freeman; and the fear of a woman differs from that of a foldier. Were the latter to fee the heavens rent afunder. he should not be so much frightened as a person of another condition of life. A violent fright is allowed to strike a woman motionless: but a foldier amazed, ought to throw himfelf directly into a fighting posture, at least by a mechanical movement. The uneafiness a man of courage feels, upon being feized with a violent pain, may be painted indeed on his countenance; yet it should have a different appearance from that which is drawn on a female visage. The anger of a choleric man is not the same as that of a melancholy person.

There is a famous piece of Julio Romano on the great altar of the little church of St Stephen at Genoa, which represents the martyrdom of this saint. The painter expresses here most admirably well the difference between the natural actions of persons of different temper and complexion, who are actuated by the same passion; insomuch that one may easily perceive, that this execution was not performed by hired officers, but by the inslamed superstitious multitude. One

of those murdering Jews has reddish hair, a fresh complexion, and, in fhort, all the marks of a choleric fanguine man, and feems quite transported with passion. His mouth and nostrils gape prodigiously wide; and his gesture is intirely that of a furious fellow; wherefore he stands tip-toe upon one leg, in order to fling his stone with greater impetuofity. Another, whose melancholy disposition is visible from the meagerness of his body, from the lividness of his complexion, and from the darkness of his hair; is placed next to the former, and contracts his whole body to level his stone at the head of the faint. One may easily perceive, that his hatred and virulency is more violent than that of the former, tho' his carriage does not express so great a transport of fury. His anger towards a man condemned by the law, and whom he helps to execute from a religious principle, is not less violent for being of a different species.

The wrath of a General should be different from that of a common soldier. In short, the same may be said of all the sentiments and passions. If I do not chuse to expatiate any longer upon this subject, 'tis because I have already said too much for such as have ever reslected upon the grand art of the expressions; and because I know 'tis impossible for me to say enough for those, who have never made any such reslection.

The poetic probability consists likewise in a conformity to those rules, which we, as well as the Italians, comprise under the name of il costume;

a conformity which adds fo much merit to Pouffin's pieces. Pursuant to these rules, if we have any notion of the places where the action has happened, we must represent them such as they really were; but if we have no distinct knowledge of them, we must take care, while we form their disposition from fancy, to avoid contradicting what others may chance to know of them. The fame rules require also, that we give to such different nations, as commonly appear in the fcenes of pictures, their peculiar color of face and habit of body which they are faid to have in history. 'Tis even commendable in representing an event that has happened in any particular place, to push our probability fo far, as so obferve what we know with regard to the animals of that country. Pouffin, who has treated feveral actions, whose scenes were supposed to be in Ægypt, has generally introduced fuch buildings, trees, and animals into his pieces, as for feveral reasons are judged to be particular to that kingdom. Monsieur le Brun has conformed to those rules, with the most scrupulous punctuality, in his pieces of the history of Alexander. The Persians and Indians are as easy to be distinguished from the Greeks by their physiognomies, as by their arms. Even their horses are not shaped like those of the Macedonians; for the Persian horses are represented of a more delicate make, as they really are, I have heard Monsieur Perrault affirm, that his friend Le Brun had ordered a sketch of some Persian horses to be sent to him from Aleppo, in order order to observe that particular part of the coftume in his pieces. 'Tis true, he was mistaken with respect to the head of Alexander the very first time he drew him; which was in the piece that represents the queens of Persia at the feet of that monarch. Inftead of Alexander's head, fomebody had given him the head of Minerva on a medal, on the reverse of which the name of Alexander was engraven. This prince therefore, contrary to historical truth, appears in this picture with the air and resemblance of a female beauty. But Le Brun corrected afterwards his miftake, upon being apprized of it, and has given us the true head of Alexander in the picture of his passage of the Granicus, and in that of his entrance into Babylon. He had borrowed his idea from the buft of this prince upon a pillar in one of the groves of Versailles, which had been changed by fome modern sculptor into a Gallic Mars, by putting a cock upon its head-piece. This bust, as well as the pillar, which is of oriental alabaster, was brought from Alexandria, all y

The poetic probability requires also, that nations should be represented, with their peculiar apparel, arms and standards: That in the Athenian colors, there should be the figure of an owl; in the Ægyptian colors, the stork, and the eagle in the Roman ensigns: And in short, that there be a conformity observed to such of their customs, as bear a relation to the action of the picture. Thus a painter, who is to draw a picture of the death of Britannicus, must not represent Nero and his

his company fitting round a table, but reclining on couches.

The custom of introducing such personages into pictures, as could never have been present at the action, because of their having lived in a different period of time, is a very gross error, from which our painters are now pretty well recovered. Thus we see no more a St Francis listening to the predication of St Paul; nor a confessor with a crucifix in hand, exhorting the good thief.

In fine, the poetic probability obliges a painter to give his personages their known and received air, whether this air has been transmitted to us by medals, statues, or portraits; or whether it has been preserved by some tradition, whereof we know not the origin; or whether, in fine, it was introduced by fancy. Tho' we have no certain knowledge of St Peter's person, yet painters and fculptors have figned, as it were, a tacit convention amongst themselves, to represent him with a particular air and shape, whereby this saint is eafily diffinguished. In cases of imitation, the received and general idea supplies the place of truth. What has been faid with regard to St Peter, may be applied also to the figure in which several other faints are drawn; and even to that which is commonly given to St Paul, tho' it be not agreable to the description this apostle has left of his own person. But that does not fignify, fince custom has ordered it otherwife. A sculptor that would attempt to represent St Paul lower, thinner, and with a shorter beard than St Peter, would be blamed ris

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blamed as much as Bandinelli was, for having placed on one fide of the statue of Adam, which he had made for the dome of Florence, a statue of Eve taller than that of her husband a.

We find by the epiftles of Sidonius Apollinaris, that the illustrious philosophers of antiquity had each of them their particular air, figure, and gesture, which were peculiarly appropriated to them in painting. Raphael has made a good use of this piece of erudition from Apollinaris, in his picture of the school of Athens. We learn also from Quintilian, that the ancient painters confined themselves in their pictures of their Gods and heroes to the same physiognomies and characters as they had been represented in by

These two statues are no longer in the cathedral church of Florence, having been removed from thence in the year 1722. by order of the grand duke Cosmus III. in order to be placed in the great hall of the old palace. They have put in their stead a group, which Michael Angelo had left impersect, representing Christ descending from the cross.

Per gymnasia pinguntur Zeusippus cervice curva, Aratus panda, Zenon fronte contracta, Epicurus cute distenta, Diogenes barba comante, Socrates coma pendente, Aristoteles brachio exferto, Xenocrates crure collecto, Heraclitus stetu oculis clausis, Democritus labris apertis, Chrysippus digitis propter numerorum indicia constrictis, Euclides propter mensurarum spatia laxatis, Cleanthes propter utrumque corrosis. Sid. 1. 9. ep. 9.

cent, quia Deorum & heroum effigies quales ab eo funt tradite, ceteri, tanquam ita necesse sit, sequuntur. Quint. Inst. 1. 12. c. 10.

Zeuxis; which was the reason of his being intitled the Legislator.

The observing of the probability appears to me therefore, next to the choice of the subject, the most important article, either in a picture or poem. Immediately after the observing of the probability comes the rule, which directs painters and poets to draw up a judicious plan, and to range their ideas in such a manner, as to have no difficulty afterwards in disintricating their objects.

C H A P. XXXI.

confined thems was in their pictures

Of the disposition of the plan. That the ordonance of pictures is to be divided into poetic and picturesque compositions.

Y reflections on the plan of poems shall be very short, tho' the subject be of great importance. Whatsoever relates to poems of any great length, has been already handled in father Bossu's treatise of the epic poem; and in the practice of the stage by abbot Aubignac; as also in the differtations which the great Corneille presixed to his own pieces. As for the lesser works of poetry, all that can be said concerning them, may be reduced to a very small compass. If they contain the recital of an action, they should as well as the pieces for the stage, have an exposition

LOUNIS :

2

or

or entrance, an intrigue or plot, and an unravelling. If they contain no action, they must have a fensible or a concealed order, and the thoughts should be disposed so as to make us apprehend them without difficulty, and even retain the fubstance of the work, as well as the force and progress of its reasonings.

With regard to painting, the ordonnance thereof, or the first arrangement of those objects which should fill a picture, ought to be divided into pic-

turesque and poetic compositions.

I call picturesque composition, the arrangement of fuch objects as are to have place in a picture, with regard to the general effect of the piece. A good picturefque composition is that, whereof the first glance produces a great effect, pursuant to the painter's intention, and to the end he had in view. For this purpose a picture ought not to be embarraffed with figures, tho' it should have enough to fill up the picture. The objects ought to be easy to be. difintricated; wherefore the figures should not maim one another, by hiding mutually one half of their heads, or of fome other parts of the body, which the subject requires to be rendered visible. 'Tis proper also that the groups be well composed; that their light be distributed judicioully; and that the local colors, inflead of destroying one another, be disposed in such a manner, as the whole may afford of itself an agreable harmony to the eye. I or sidnight et as sometas

sad their expression should be a real

The poetic composition is an ingenious difpolition of the figures, calculated to render the action it represents, more moving and probable. It requires that all the personages be connected by a principal action; for a picture may contain feveral incidents, provided all these particular actions unite in one principal one, and that, collected all together, they form but one and the same subject. The rules of painting are as much averse to a duplicity of action, as those of dramatic poetry. If painting be allowed to have its episodes like poetry, those episodes ought in pictures, as well as in tragedies, to be connected with the subject; and the unity of action should be equally preserved in the production of a painter as in that of a poet.

'Tis also proper, that the personages be placed with judgment, and dreffed with decency, in proportion to their dignity and importance. The father of Iphigenia, for example, ought not to be concealed behind the other figures at the facrifice of this princes: Nay, he should have the most remarkable place next to that of the Nothing is more unsupportable than indifferent figures placed in the middle of a picture. A foldier ought not to be as well dreffed as his General, unless some particular circumstance should happen to require it. All the perfonages, as we have already observed, when speaking of the probability, ought to make fuch an appearance as is fuitable to their circumstances; and their expression should be agreable to the character character in which they are drawn. But particular care should be taken to avoid introducing any idle sigures, that have no share in the principal action; for these do but consound and embarrass the spectator. Nor ought the artist to transgress against decency or probability, to savor his designing or coloring; whereby he sacrifices his poetry to the mechanic part of his art.

The talents for poetic and picturesque compositions are fo diffinct, that we observe some painters excel in one, who are very ignorant of the other. Paolo Veronese, for instance, has succeeded extremely well in that part of the ordonnance which we call picturesque composition. Never was there a painter more dexterous in ranging a vast number of personages, on the same scene in placing his figures to an advantage, and in fine, in filling up a large piece without any appearance of confusion. And yet this same Paolo Veronele, has miscarried in his poetic composition. There is no unity of action in the greatest part of his pictures. One of his most magnificent pieces, the nuptials of Cana, which is to be feen at the bottom of the refectory of the convent of St George at Venice, is full of errors contrary to the picturesque poetry. A small number only out of a prodigious crowd of spectators, with which it is flocked, appear attentive to the miracle of the conversion of the water into wine, which is the principal subject. Not one of them seems moved with it, as much as might be naturally expected. Among the guests, he has introduced some Benedictin

dictin monks belonging to the convent that employed him. Finally his personages are dressed at random, and he contradicts, according to custom, the positive and known accounts we have of the manners and customs of the people from whom he has taken his actors.

Monsieur de Piles, a great lover of paint ing, and who used to handle the pencil himfelf, has left us feveral tracts concerning this art, which deferve to be univerfally known; but one of these pieces, which is intitled, The balance of Painters, merits all the praises due to original works. Here he tells us diffinctly, to what degree of merit each painter he speaks of, has arrived in every one of the four parts, into which the art of painting is divided. These are the composition, the defign, the expression, and the coloring a. After having supposed, that the twentieth degree of his balance, indicates the highest point of perfection in each of those parts; he acquaints us what degree each painter has attained to. But for want of distributing the art of painting into five parts, and dividing what is called ordonnance in general into picturesque and poetic compositions, he falls into several unwarrantable propositions, such as placing in the same degree of his balance Paolo Veronese and Pouffin, in quality of composers. And yet the Italians themselves allow, that Paolo Veronese is no way to be compared in the poetic part of painting to Poussin, who in his life-time had the title of the painter of men of wit, the most flattering encomium that can be bestowed upon a painter.

This Paolo Veronese is placed in our balance in the same rank with Monsieur Le Brun; tho' with regard to the poetic composition, (the only one here confidered) Le Brun might perhaps have deserved to have been placed as high as Raphael. There are in the king's apartment at Verfailles, two excellent pictures opposite to one another, the pilgrims of Emmaüs by Paolo Veronese, and the queens of Persia at the feet of Alexander by Le Brun. A very slender attention to these pieces will be sufficient to convince us, that if the neighbourhood of Paolo Veronese be dangerous to Le Brun with regard to the coloring, the French painter is a much more dangerous neighbour to the Italian, with respect to the picturesque poetry and the expression. not difficult to conjecture to whom Raphael would have given the prize: in all appearance he would have pronounced in favor of that kind of merit, in which he excelled himfelf; that is, in favor of the expression and of the poetry. I should advise my reader to consult the first volume of Monsieur Perrault's parallels a, where he will find a most judicious examen of these two pieces. This gentleman, whose memory will be always respected by those that knew him, notwithstanding what he wrote concerning the ancients, was as capable of making a good comparison between the performance of Paolo Veronese, and

2 Page 255.

that of Le Brun, as he was incapable, according to Mr. Wotton, of drawing a just parallel between the ancient and modern poets.

C H A P. XXXII.

Of the importance of such faults, as painters and poets happen to commit, contrary to their rules.

S the parts of a picture are always near each other, so as their intire assemblage may be feen at one view; the defects therefore which occur in the ordonnance are a great obstruction to the effect of its beauties. relative faults are easily perceived, upon our having a collective view of those objects which have not their due relation to one another. If this fault consists, like that of Bandinelli, in the figure of a woman higher than that of a man of equal dignity, it is eafily observed by reason of the proximity of the figures. case is different with respect to a poem of some As we have only a fuccessive view of a dramatic or epic poem, and as the space of several days is required for reading the latter; the defects in the ordonnance, and in the distribution of these poems, are not fo obvious as the like faults in a picture. To detect the relative errors of a poem, a person must recollect all that he has seen or heard,

heard, and go back, as it were, the same way, in order to compare the objects that are defective in relation or proportion. For example, one must remember, that the incident which forms the unravelling in the fifth act, has not been fufficiently prepared in the preceding acts; or that a thing faid by a personage in the fourth act, contradicts the character given of him in the first. what does not occur always to every body, and what feveral never take notice of. They do not read a poem, to examine whether the author be always confiftent with himself, but to have the pleasure of being moved with it. They peruse poems in the same manner as they look at pictures, and are offended only with those, which strike, as it were, their fense, and considerably diminish their pleasure.

Besides, the real desects of a picture, such as a figure of too low a fize, a maimed arm, or a personage who presents us a grimace instead of a natural expression, are always placed in conjunc-We do not behold the tion with its beauties. parts that have been well executed by the painter, feparate from those in which he has miscarried. Wherefore his defects hinder his perfections from making fuch an impression upon us, as might be otherwise expected. The contrary happens in a poem, where even real imperfections, such as a fcene deviating from the rules of probability, or fuch as fentiments unfuitable to the supposed situa-

tion of a personage, give us a disrelish only for that part of the poem which they happen to dif-

figure ;

figure; while they cast but a very small shade on the neighbouring beauties.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Of the poetic stile, in which words are considered as signs of our ideas. That the fate of poems depends on the poetic stile.

HUS the beauty of every part of a poem, I mean the method of treating each scene, as well as the manner in which the personages explain themselves, contributes more to the success of a work, than the justness and regularity of its plan, that is, than the union and dependance of all the different parts which compose a poem. A tragedy, whose scenes particularly considered are beautiful, tho' they happen to be ill connected, must succeed better than a tragedy, whose scenes, tho' well joined, are flat and infipid. Hence we admire several poems that are far from being regular; but being fustained by invention, and a full poetic ftyle, they prefent us continually with affecting images, which engage our attention. The fenfible pleasure we receive from new beauties growing up at every period, prevents our perceiving part of the real defects of the piece, and inclines us to excuse the others. 'Tis thus a man of an amiable presence makes us forget his imperfections, and even fometimes his vices, during the time

fation. He even influences us frequently to that degree, as to make us overlook the imperfections and vices in the general definition of his character.

The poetic style consists in giving interesting sentiments to those who are made to speak, and in expressing by sigures and images capable of moving us, that which would have no effect upon us, were it related in the simplicity of a prose style.

The first ideas which rise in the soul, upon its receiving the impression of some lively affection, and are commonly called sentiments, have a power of affecting us, tho' expressed in the simplest terms, because they speak the language of the heart. Emilia therefore affects us, when she says in the plainest words,

J'aime encore plus Cinna, que je ne bais Auguste. I love my Cinna more than I detest Augustus.

A fentiment would even cease to be so moving, were it expressed in magnificent terms, and with pompous figures. Old Horatius, for example, would not engage me so much as he does, if, instead of dropping simply the samous qu'il mourût, that he can die, he were to express this same sentiment in a sigurative style. The probability then would be lost with the simplicity of the expression. Where affectation discovers itself, there is an end of the language of the heart. Agreable hereto Horace says,

Et

Et tragicus plerunque dolet sermone pedestri.

Hor. de arte.

And tragedy in humble words must weep,

The style must suppliant seem, and seem to creep.

CREECH.

But the remarks which the personages make upontheir own and the sentiments of others, the reflections of the poet, the recitals, the descriptions, in short all that is not properly sentiment, require, as much as the nature of the poem and probability will permit, to be represented to us by images capable of fixing themselves in our imagination.

I except from this general rule the recitals of prodigious events, made just after they have happened. 'Tis likely that an ocular witness to these events, fuch as ought to be employed in the narration, was ftruck with a furprize from which he has not yet recovered. It would be therefore contrary to the rules of probability, for him to use such figures in his recital, as occur not to a person that is frightened, and who has no thoughts of being pathetic. those prodigious events require the poet's attention to procure, as much as possible, the spectators affent; and one way of obtaining it is to make them give the recital thereof in the plainest terms, and such as are the least capable of rendering the person who speaks, liable to be suspected of exaggeration. But, as I have just now observed, exclusive of those two cases, the poetic style ought to be filled with figures fo perfectly Feetly descriptive of its objects, as to render it impossible for us to hear them, without having our imaginations filled with a continued succession of images, in proportion as the periods of the discourse follow one another.

Every kind of poem has fomething particular in its style. The greatest part of the images, with which the style of tragedy must be fed, are too grave for that of comedy; at least the comic writer ought to make a very fober use of them. He should never employ them, unless it be just to make Chremes speak, when this personage falls only for a moment into a tragic passion. We have already observed, that ecloques borrowed their defcriptions and images from fuch objects as adorn the fields, and from the occurrences of a country life. The poetic stile of fatyr ought to be supported with images propereft for exciting our bile. The ode foars up to the heavens, to borrow there its images and comparisons from the thunder, from the stars, and from the Gods themselves. But these are things, whereof experience has already instructed such as are lovers of poetry.

We must therefore be brought to imagine, that we behold, as it were, the object we only hear described in verse. Ut pictura poesis, says Horace. Cleopatra would not so much engage our attention, were the poet to make her say in a prose style, to her brother's detestable ministers: "Tremble, ye "wretches! Cæsar, the avenger of crimes, is "approaching with his victorious army." Her thought takes a much grander turn, and appears Q4 with

with a far greater degree of the sublime, when it is clad with poetic figures, and puts the instrument of Jove's vengeance into the hands of Cæsar. The following verse a,

Tremblez, mechans, tremblez; voici venir la foudre.

Tremble, ye villains; bere comes the thunder; tremble!

shews Cæsar armed with thunderbolts, with which he pours out his vengeance against the murderers of Pompey. To fay in plain terms, that there is no great merit in gaining the affections of a man who is of an amorous disposition; but that it is a fine thing to make a person fall in love, who has never shewn any propensity towards this pasfion; would be only a common truth, which would hardly engage our attention. But when Racine puts this very truth into the mouth of Aricia, and imbellishes it with all the ornaments of his poetic style, it becomes most delightful and charming: We are ravished with the images in which the poet expresses himself; and the thought, trivial as it is in profe, is formed by his verses into an eloquent speech, which strikes our imagination, and imprints it felf on our memory.

Pour moi, je suis plus siere, & suis la gloire aisée,

D'arracher un hommage à mille autres offert, Et d'entrer dans un cœur de toutes parts ouvert. Mais de faire fléchir un courage inflexible,

• The death of Pompey.

De porter la douleur dans une ame insensible, D'enchaîner un captif de ses fers étonné, Contre un joug qui lui plaît vainement mutiné, Voilà ce qui me plaît, voilà ce qui m'irrite.

But I these easy conquests can despise, To force a tribute from a vulgar breast, Or storm a heart that's open on all sides. But to subdue a proud obdurate mind, To give a sense of pain to cruel souls, To lead a captive at his chains surprized, Rebelling vainly 'gainst a pleasing yoke, This is my chief ambition and delight.

These verses imprint sive different images in our imagination.

Were a person to tell us, in simple terms, "I shall die in the village where I was born;" his speech would have nothing in it that is affecting. Death is the fate of all mankind, and to finish one's days in the place where they began, is a lot reserved for the happiest of mortals. The abbot Chaulieu presents us nevertheless with this very thought, dressed up in images that render it extremely moving.

Fontenay, lieux delicieux,
Où je vis d'abord la lumiere,
Bientôt au bout de ma carriere
Chez toi je joindrai mes ayeux.

Muses, qui dans ce lieu champêtre, Avec sain me sîtes nourrir, Beaux arbres qui m'avez vu naitre, Bientôt vous me verrez mourir.

O Fontenay!

O Fontenay! thou sweet retreat!

Where first I breath'd this vital air,

Amidst thy shades relentless fate,

Will quickly stop life's full career.

Ye Muses, who first deign'd to fold My infant limbs, and form my heart, Ye trees, ye flow'rs! you'll soon behold, This fleeting soul from hence depart.

These apostrophes make me imagine I behold the poet in conversation with the Deities and groves of the place. Methinks I see them touched with the tidings he brings; and the impression he makes on them, raises a like emotion in my bosom.

The art of moving and perfuading mankind, confifts principally in knowing how to make a good use of these images. The very severest writer, who professes most feriously, that he intends to employ nothing but plain reason to convince us, foon finds, that to carry his point he must move us; and that, for this end, he must fet before us the pictures of the objects he treats of. Father Mallebranche, one of the greatest flicklers for ftrict reasoning we have had in France, has wrote against the contagious disorder of strong imaginations, whose art of seducing confifts in the fecundity of their images, and in the talent they have of giving a lively picture of their objects a. But you must not expect dry reasonings in this father's discourse, such as exclude

2 Inquiry after truth, Book 2. Part 3.

all figures capable of moving and feducing us, and are strictly confined to the sole strength and efficacy of argument. This very discourse is full of images and pictures, with which he speaks to our imagination against the abuse of the imagination.

The poetic style constitutes the principal difference between verse and prose. Numbers of metaphors, that would be esteemed too bold in the most elevated oratorial style, are received into poetry. Images and figures ought likewife to be more frequently admitted in most forts of poetry, than in oratorial discourses. That rhetoric, which attempts to convince our reason, must always preserve an air of moderation and sincerity. The case is otherwise with respect to poetry, whose chief aim is to move us, preferable to every other confideration, and who will grant, if you defire it, that she is frequently defective in fincerity. 'Tis therefore the style that forms the poet, and not the rhime and the cæfura. According to Horace, one may be a poet tho' he writes in profe; and feveral are frequently profe-authors, tho' they write in verse. Quintilian gives so complete an explication of the nature and use of images and figures towards the end of his eighth book, and in the beginning of the following, that he leaves nothing to be done after him, except it be to admire his good fense and penetration.

This most important part of poetry is at the same time the most difficult. A poet has need of a divine fire, not for rhime, but for the inventing of images capable of representing perfectly what

he intends to fay, and for finding expressions proper to give them an existence. An indifferent poet may by dint of confultation and labor form a regular plan, and bestow a decency of manners upon his personages; but 'tis he only who is bleffed with the genius of the art, that is capable of supporting his verses with continual fictions, and with fresh images rising at every period. A man of no genius, falls quickly into a frigidity, owing to figures which have no justness, and convey no clear idea of their object; or else he dwindles into the ridicule arifing from figures quite disproportionable to the subject. Such, for instance, are the figures used by the Carmelite author of the poem of St Mary Magdalen, which frequently form grotefque images, where the poet ought to prefent us with fuch only as are of a serious nature. The advice of a friend may indeed prevail upon us to suppress some improper or ill-contrived figures; but it cannot inspire us with a genius necessary for the inventing of fuch as are proper for our purpose. A friend's affiftance, as we shall observe when we come to treat of gennis, cannot make a poet; the most it can do, is to help to improve him.

A very stender reflection on the fate of French poems published within these fourscore years, will be sufficient to convince us, that the principal merit of a poem consists in the agreement and continuity of such images and pictures as are there displayed. The character of the poetic style has always decided the good or bad success of

poems,

poems, even of those which, by their length, feem to have the greatest dependance on the economy of the plan, on the distribution of the action, and on the decency of the manners.

There are two tragedies written by the great Corneille, whose economy and most part of the characters are extremely defective; which are the Cid, and the death of Pompey. One might even contest with the latter piece the title of tragedy. The public notwithstanding, charmed with the ftyle of these pieces, cannot help admiring them, and even prefer them to feveral others, whose manners are superior, and whose plan is regular. All the critical arguments in the world will never convince them, that they are mistaken in taking those two tragedies for excellent pieces, which, for these fourscore years, have constantly drawn tears from the spectators. But as the author of the English tragedy of Cato says: English poets have succeeded much better in the style than in the fentiments of their tragedies. Their language is very often noble and sonorous, but the sense either very trifling or very common. On the contrary, in the ancient tragedies, and indeed in those of Corneille and Racine, tho' the expressions are very great, it is the thought that bears them up and swells them. For my own part, I prefer a noble sentiment that is depressed with homely language, infinitely before a vulgar one that is blown up with all the found and energy of language 2.

^{*} Spedator, April 14, 1711. Nº 39.

The Maid of Orleans written by Chapelain, and Clouis done by Desmarets, are epic poems, whose constitution and manners are unquestionably superior to those of the two tragedies above-mentioned. Besides, their incidents, which form the most agreeable part of our history, ought to be much more engaging with regard to the French nation, than events that have happened a great while ago in Spain or Egypt. And yet every body knows the ill success of those two epic poems; which we can attribute to nothing else, but to the desect of their poetic style. One scarce finds in either of them a natural sentiment capable of engaging us.

With regard to the images, Defmarets busies himself everywhere in chalking out chimeras; and Chapelain, in his barbarous style, draws none but lame and imperfect figures. All their paintings seem to be from Gothic originals. Hence proceeds the only defect of the Maid of Orleans, a defect which, as Boileau says, even its greatest advocates must agree to; which is, that it will not bear reading.



Of the motive of reading poetry: that readers do not look for instructions in poems, as in other books.

THE gentlemen of the profession are the only people who make a regular study of the reading of the poets. We have observed already, that the generality of those, who have done with the college discipline, read them only for amusement; and not, as one reads historians and philosophers, for instruction. 'Tis true there may be useful lessons drawn sometimes from the perusal of a poem; yet it is not the utility of those lessons that engages people to read it.

We are therefore actuated by a quite contrary motive in reading a poem, from what we are in perufing any other book. In reading a history, for example, we look upon its style, as only an accessary part. The matter of importance is its truth and the singularity of those facts, with which it acquaints us. In perusing a poem, we do not consider the instructions we may chance to receive from thence as the principal part. 'Tis the style that is of the greatest importance, for the pleasure and amusement of the reader arise from thence. Had the poetic style of the romance of Telemachus been stat and insipid, very sew

readers

readers would be at the trouble of reading the whole work thro', were it even to abound with the same useful instructions.

It should be observed, that I have spoken here, with regard only to those that professedly study; for, as to such as read chiefly for amusement, and secondly for instruction (which is nevertheless the use that three parts out of sour make of their reading) they chuse rather to read historical books written in an engaging style, than ill-written histories, tho' full of exactness and erudition. Numbers are directed by this taste, even in the choice of philosophical works, and of books of other sciences of a more serious nature than philosophy. Hence it is easy to judge, whether the public ought not to conclude that poem to be the best, which affords them most pleasure.

Men therefore, who read poems only to amuse themselves agreably with sictions, are carried away of course by the actual pleasure of reading. They give way to the impressions they receive from that part of the poem which they are actually ingaged in. When a passage strikes their fancy, they never suspend their pleasure to reslect, whether it contains no desects contrary to rules. If they happen to light on some very gross and palpable error, their pleasure is indeed for that minute interrupted. They may chance to rail then against the poet; but they are soon reconciled to him, when they have got over the desective passage, and have re-

commenced

commenced to tafte the pleasure of new beauties. Actual pleasure, which has so great an empire over man, as to make him forget past misfortunes, and render him blind to future calamities, may cancel the memory of the most shocking blunders of a poem, when they are once out of fight. respect to those relative faults which are discovered only by going back and reflecting upon what we have feen, they cause but a very small abatement in the pleasure of the reader or the spectator, even when he reads or fees the piece, after having been previously instructed of its defects. Those who have read the criticisms on the Cid, are not the less pleased with the acting of this tragedy.

In fact, an event which a tragic poet has left too easy to be foreseen, by giving it a coarse preparation, will be capable nevertheless of moving us, if it be well managed. Though the events in Polieuctes and Athalia do not really furprize fuch as have frequently feen those tragedies, yet they always draw tears from the spectators. The mind feems to forget the particular events of a tragedy whose fable it is acquainted with, in order to have a more perfect enjoyment of the pleasure arising from the furprize caused by those unexpected events. Something of this nature must certainly be the case; for, after having seen the tragedy of Mithridates twenty times acted, one is as much struck with the fudden return of this prince, when announced at the end of the first act, as if this incident of the piece occasioned a real surprize. Our

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memory therefore appears suspended at the spectacle, and we seem to have no desire of coming at the knowledge of the events before they are made public. We avoid anticipating our intelligence; and, as what we have seen at other representations escapes our memories, so we may likewise forget what a poet's indiscretion has made him prematurely reveal. Does the allurement of pleasure find it so difficult a task to stifle the voice of reason?

In fine, if the charms of coloring are so powerful, as to make us fall in love with Bassano's pieces, notwithstanding the enormous faults with which they abound, contrary to ordonnance and design, and contrary to poetic and picturesque probability; if, I say, the charms of coloring make us admire them, tho' these very faults are before our eyes at the time we commend them; one may easily conceive how the allurements of a poetic style can suspend the memory of such desects as we have perceived in the perusal of a poem.

From what has been hitherto explained, it follows, that the best poem is that which engages us most; that which bewitches us so far, as to conceal from us the greatest part of its faults, and to make us even willingly forget those we have seen, and with which we have been offended. Now a poem engages us always in proportion to the charms of its style. Hence people will always prefer a poem, that moves them, to a regular piece; and hence we prefer the Cid to so many other tragedies. If we have a mind therefore to reduce things to their true principle, 'tis by the style

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ftyle we must form a judgment of the poem,
rather than by its regularity and decency of
manners.

Our neighbours the Italians have two epic poems in their language, the " Gierusalemme liberata of Tasso, and the b Rolando furioso of Ariosto, which, like the Iliad and Æneid, are received and read in all parts of Europe. fo's poem is commended for the decency of its manners, the fuitableness and dignity of its characters, the oeconomy of its plan; and, in a word, the regularity of the piece. I shall mention nothing concerning the manners, characters, decency, and plan of Ariofto's poem. Homer was a geometrician in comparison to him, and every body knows the title 'which cardinal d'Este gave to the shapeless affemblage of ill-patched stories which compose the Rolando furioso. unity of action is fo little observed, that they have been obliged in the later editions, to point out by a marginal note placed near the passage where the poet interrupts his story, the part of the poem where he recommences it, that the reader may follow the thread of the narration. This has been of great fervice to the public; for Ariosto is feldom read twice in order, that is,

a Jerusalem delivered.

b Mad or frantic Rowland.

of his poem, was, ove diavolo, meffer Lodovico, hai trovato tante coglionorie? that is, Where the devil, Lewis, did you find such a heap of trumpery and rubbish?

passing from the first canto to the second, and from the fecond to the rest successively, but by following, without any regard to the order of the books, the different stories, which he has rather incorporated than united. Nevertheless the Italians, generally speaking, prefer Ariosto considerably to Tasso. The academy of the Crusca, after having examined the cause in form, has made an authentic decision, which adjudges the first feat to Ariosto among the Italian epic poets. The most zealous advocate for Tasso acknowledges he attacks the general opinion, and that the public has already given it in favor of Ariosto, seduced by the bewitching charms of his poetic flyle. In this respect it certainly surpasses the poetry of Tasso's Jerusalem, whose figures are frequently unfuitable to the passage, to which he applies them, and have oftentimes more show than truth. I mean that they surprize and dazzle the imagination, but do not draw fuch images as are proper to engage us. This is what Boileau calls the tinsel of Tasso, a censure that has been generally approved of, except by fome few of Tasso's own countrymen. the poet himself, from whom the dreams of this opera are taken, fays Mr. Addison, speaking of an Italian opera, the subject whereof had been borrowed of Tasso, I must intirely agree with Monsieur Boileau that one verse in Virgil is worth all the clincant or tinsel of Tasso b. 'Tis true

a Camillo Pellegrini, p. 11.

b Spectator the 6th of March, No. 5.

POETRY and PAINTING. notwithstanding, if I be allowed to continue the figure, that we discover very frequently the finest

gold intermixt with this tinfel.

It would be in vain to attempt to make the Italians alter their opinion upon this point; and were a foreigner to take it into his head to censure their depravity of taste, 'tis uncertain what answer they would make. Perhaps their reply would be the fame as that which was made by our predecesfors, when endeavours were used to diminish their efteem for the Cid. Other people's reasonings, they faid, may perfuade us indeed to the contrary of what we think, but not of what we feel. Now our very fenses tell us, which poem affords us most pleasure. This is what I shall speak of more at large, at the end of the fecond part of this work.

The expression seems to me to be the same thing in a picture, as the poetic ftyle in a poem. I should like to compare the coloring with that part of the poetic art, which confifts in fuch a choice and arrangement of words, as produce verses that have an harmonious found. This branch of the poetic art may be called the mechanic part of poetry.

W. W.

CHAP. XXXV.

Of the mechanic part of poetry, which considers words only as simple sounds. The advantages which poets, who write in Latin, have over such as compose in French.

A S the poetic style confists in the choice and arrangement of words, confidered as figns of our ideas; fo the mechanic part of poetry lies in the election and disposition of words, regarded as fimple founds, without any respect to their fignification. Wherefore, as the poetic flyle confiders words with reference to their fignification, which renders them more or less adapted to the exciting of particular ideas; fo the mechanic part of poetry confiders them only as more or less harmonious; and inasmuch as being variously combined they form rough or melodious phrases in the pronunciation. The end which the poetic style proposes to itself is the drawing of images, and flattering the imagination; the defign of the mechanic part of poetry is to please the ear by the harmony of its verses. Some will therefore object, that their interests must be frequently opposite: I allow it; and a person must be born a poet to be able to reconcile them.

With regard to the mechanic part of French verses, I shall include the remarks I have to make

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make upon this fubject, in the parallel I am going to draw between the Latin tongue and ours, in order to shew the advantage which the Latin poets have over the French in this branch of the art of poetry. It will not therefore be amis, to prove here in form, that the opinion of those, who maintain the fuperiority of the Latin poetry over the French with respect to the poetic style, as well as to the cadence and harmony of the verfe, is far from being erroneous. After having shewn, that the Latin is more adapted to the drawing of images than the French, by reason of its brevity and transposition, I shall produce several reasons to evince that a person who composes verses, has much greater advantages towards forwarding the numbers and harmony of his Latin lines, than a verfifier in the French tongue.

The Latin, strictly speaking, is much concifer than the French. If some Latin words are longer than their French fynonymous ones, there are also divers French words, that are longer than their correspondent terms in Latin: so that balancing one with another, the French have nothing in this respect to object against the Latin. But the Latins decline their words in fuch a manner, that the termination only points out the cases. When we meet with the word Dominus, we know by the termination, whether it be in the genitive, dative, or accusative. It makes Domini in the genitive, Dominum in the accufative. One may also know by its ending, whether it be in the plural or the fingular. If fome cases

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cases happen to have the same termination, the government of the verb prevents the reader from being mistaken. The Latins likewise decline their nouns without the help of the articles le, du, &c. which we are obliged to use in our French declensions, by reason we do not change the termination with the case. Thus we say in French le maitre, au maitre.

The Latins conjugate also their verbs, as they decline their nouns. The termination diftinguishes the tense, person, mood, and number. terminations happen to be alike, the fense of the phrase removes the ambiguity. At twelve years old one is feldom mistaken in it, and at fourteen it does not cause the least hesitation. French the most part of the tenses of the verbs are obliged to be conjugated with the help of two other verbs, which are therefore called auxiliaries, and are the possessive verb Avoir, and the substantive verb Etre. If the Latins are forced to have recourse to an auxiliary verb, in order to conjugate fome tenses of the passive, we are almost always obliged to employ two for that very purpose. render the Latin amatus fui, we must say, j'ai èté aimé. In the conjugating of French verbs we are likewise forced to call in the affistance of the pronouns, je, tu, il, and their plural numbers. Besides, we are not allowed to suppress the preposition, which the Latins generally omitted: thus they fay, illum ense occidit; but we, to express these three words, must say in French, il le tua avec une épée. Wherefore it is as clear that the French

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French is effentially more prolix than the Latin, as it is evident that one circle is larger than another, when it requires a greater extent of compasses to measure it.

If some body should alledge, that there are Latin versions from the French which are longer than their originals; I answer, that this excess in the translation proceeds either from the nature of the subject treated in the original, or from the fault of the translator; but that nothing can be concluded from thence against the brevity of the

Latin tongue.

In the first place, a Latin translator, that is but indifferently versed in this language, upon not recollecting speedily the Latin word proper for expressing the French, instead of fearthing for it in a dictionary, takes it into his head to render it by a circumlocution. Hence it is that boys exercises are generally longer than the French dictated by their mafter. In the fecond place it may happen, that the Latin translator of a French historian cannot find fynonymous terms in the Latin tongue, for feveral French words used in giving a detail of a siege, of a sea-fight, or of a fession of parliament. As the Romans had no knowledge of those things which the translator is to treat of, they consequently had no terms proper for denoting their fignification. Thus they had no words to express a mortar, or the faliant angle of a counterfcarp, because these are things they were unacquainted with in those times. The translator is therefore obliged

to have recourse to a circumlocution, and to make use of several words in rendering what a French writer might have expressed in one. But this would be only an accidental prolixity, fuch as that of a Frenchman, who, were he obliged to make a narrative of a feaft given by Lucullus, or the description of a combat of gladiators, would be of course reduced to talk of several things that have no particular name in our tongue. Wherefore the Latin is more concise than the French, when the subject treated is such as has an equal advantage of terms in both languages. Now nothing contributes more than brevity to the energy of a phrase. Words are like metals used in the fetting of diamonds; the less metal is used, the more show is made by the diamond. An image comprized in fix words ftrikes in a more lively manner, and has a quicker effect, than that which to finish it takes up ten. All our best poets have affured me, that this is a truth which will never be contested by any judicious writer.

The Latin has not only the advantage over the French with regard to the poetic style, but moreover it infinitely surpasses it in the mechanic part of poetry, and this for four reasons. The Latin words are more graceful than the French in several respects. 'Tis easier to make an harmonious composition in Latin than in French. The rules of Latin poetry lay not so much restraint upon the poet, as the French poetry does. And sinally, the observing of the rules of Latin poetry throws a greater variety of beauties into the verse,

than

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than the conforming to the rules of French poetry. Let us enlarge a little upon the truth of these four articles.

In the first place the Latin words are more graceful than the French in two respects. Words may be confidered either as figns of our ideas, or as fimple founds. Confidered as figns of our ideas, they are susceptible of two different beauties. The first is that of exciting in our minds an agreable idea. In this respect the words of all languages are upon an equality. Thus the word perturbator, which founds fo well to the ear, is not more graceful in Latin, than brouillon is in French; because they both excite the same idea. The fecond beauty is the particular relation that words bear to the idea they fignify. . This is the imitating in some measure the inarticulate found, which we should make to signify it. But this requires fome explication.

Men convey their conceptions to one another by founds artificial, or natural. Artificial founds are articulate words, which men who speak the same language, have agreed to use in the expressing of their ideas. Hence it comes that some words bear a signification only amongst a particular number of men. A French word has a signification only amongst those who understand French; wherefore it excites no manner of idea when this language is not understood. When men first formed these artificial sounds, each time they set about making a new language; they must have sollowed the instinct of nature, in doing what is practised

practifed even in our days, by fuch as are at a loss for a word they want, in order to express any particular thing. They strive to make themselves understood either by mimicking the found which that thing makes, or by mixing with fuch an imperfect found as they are able to form, fome tone that has the greatest likeness or affinity possible with the object, the idea of which they want to convey without being able to name it. 'Tis thus a foreigner, ignorant of the French name for thunder would supply the want of this word by some found refembling as much as possible the noise of this meteor. 'Tis thus, in all probability, the ancient Gauls formed the name of cocq, which we use now in the same signification as they, to imitate by the found of the word, the noise this bird makes by intervals. Thus likewise they formed the word bec, which had the same signification among them as it has with us.

These mimic sounds must have been principally used, when there was occasion for giving names to sighs, laughs, groans, and all the inarticulate expressions of our sentiments and passions. 'Tis not conjecturally we know that the Greeks used them in this manner. Quintilian a tells us expressly, that they had used them thus, and com-

a Fingere Græcis magis concessum est, qui sonis quibusdam & affectibus non dubitaverunt nomina aptare, non alia libertate quam qua illi primi homines rebus appellationes dederunt. QUINT. Inst. 1.8 c. 3.

mends them for their invention. Now the founds, which these words imitate, are signs instituted by nature itself, to signify the passions and other things whereof they are signs; and 'tis from her they draw their signification and energy. In fact, they are pretty near the same in all countries, similar in this respect to the cries of animals. This however is certain, that if the sounds by which men express their surprize, joy, grief and other passions, be not intirely the same in all places; they have at least so great a likeness, that every body understands them a. This is, if the expression be indulged me, a money that is coined in nature's mint, and current amongst all nations.

It follows therefore, that words which imitate the found they fignify, or the found which we should naturally make, in order to express the thing whereof they are the established sign, or that have any other relation to the thing signified; have a much stronger energy than those which bear no other affinity to the thing signified, than that which has been authorized by custom. A word that has some natural relation to the thing signified, is much quicker in raising an idea thereof. The sign which has received part of its force and signification from nature, is more potent, and operates more effectually

Ut in tanta per omnes gentes nationesque linguæ diversitate, hic mihi omnium hominum communis sermo videatur. Id. l. 11. C. 2.

upon us, than one which owes all its energy to chance, or to the caprice of the institutor.

Mother-languages, which have been fo called by reason of their not being derived from any other tongue, but for having been formed of the jargon, which men who lived in neighbouring huts had invented, should naturally contain a greater number of these mimic words, than the derivative tongues. Upon the forming of the latter; chance, as well as the condition of the organs of fuch as compose them, (which differs according to the air and climate of each country) the manner also in which the old language is blended with the new, and in fine, the genius which prefides at its birth, are the cause that the pronunciation of most of the mimic words comes to be altered. Thus they lose the energy they were possessed of before in confequence of the natural relation of their found to the thing, whereof they were instituted figns. Hence the advantage proceeds which mothertongues have over derivative languages. those, for instance, who understand the Hebrew are charmed with the energy of the words of this primitive tongue.

Now tho' the Latin itself be a language derived from the Greek and the Tuscan, nevertheless it is a mother-tongue with respect to the French; the greatest part of whose words are derived from the Latin. Wherefore notwithstanding several Latin words be less energetical than those of the language, from which they are derived, they

must

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must yet be more emphatical than the French. Besides, the genius of our language is extremely timorous, and very feldom attempts to break thro' rules, to attain to fuch beauties as it would acquire were it less exact and scrupulous.

We observe therefore that several words. which have still a mimic nature in the Latin. have no fuch thing in the French. Our word, burlement, does not express the howling of the wolf in the fame manner as ululatus, from whence it is derived, when it is pronounced ooloolatus, as feveral nations pronounce it. The fame may be faid with regard to the words fingultus, gemitus, and a vast number of others. French words are not fo energetical as the Latin, from whence they are borrowed. I was therefore in the right to fay, that the greatest part of the Latin words are more graceful than the French, even examining them only as figns of our ideas.

With regard to words confidered as fimple founds that bear no fignification, certain it is that in this respect some please more, and consequently are more graceful and agreable than others. Words, composed of founds, which of themselves and by their mixture are more pleafing to the ear, ought naturally to be more agreable than others in which the founds are not fo happily combined; and this, as I have observed. without any respect to their fignification. any one deny that the French word compagnon is not more pleasing to the ear, than that of collegue, tho'

tho' with regard to their fignification, the word collegue conveys a nobler idea than compagnon? Common foldiers, and the lowest of mechanics and laborers have companions; but magistrates only have collegues. For as fyllables, according to the obfervation of Quintilian 2, are rendered sonorous by the full and open found of their letters, so words become barmonious and agreable to the ear in proportion to the found and barmony of their syllables. There are more of these sonorous syllables in the word compagnon than in collegue; and one of our best poets, and what makes most for our purpose, one of our best versifiers, has chosen rather to make use of the word compagnon than of collegue, in a phrase where collegue was the proper word. He availed himself of that maxim of Cicero, which permits us fometimes to facrifice our rules and even a part of the fense to the charms of harmony. Impetratum est, says he, speaking of fome Latin words, à consuetudine, ut suavitatis causa peccare liceret.

Now, generally speaking, Latin words have a better found than the French. The final syllables of words, which make a more sensible impression than others, because of the pause with which they are generally sollowed, are, commonly speaking, more sonorous and varied in Latin. Too

Nam ut syllabæ è litteris meliùs sonantibus clariores sunt, ita verba è syllabis magis vocalia & quò plus quæque spiritus habet, eò auditu pulchrior. QUINT Inst. lib. 8. c. 5.

M. ROUSSEAU.

many of our French words are terminated with what we call our e feminine. The French words are therefore, generally speaking, inferior in beauty to the Latin, whether they be examined as figns of ideas, or whether they be confidered as fimple founds. This is my first reason for maintaining, that the Latin tongue is fitter for poetry than the French.

My fecond reason is drawn from the construction of these two languages. The Latin syntax allows us to invert the natural order of words, and to transpose them, till we have hit upon an arrangement, in which they will bear pronouncing with eafe, and even cause an agreable melody. But in our construction, the case of a noun cannot be marked diffinctly in a phrase, but by the help of the natural order of construction, and by the rank there given to the word: For example, we fay le pere in French, as well in the accusative as in the nominative. Were I to put le pere before the verb, when it is in the accusative, the phrase would be mere nonsense. We are therefore obliged, under the penalty of becoming unintelligible, to give the first place to the nominative of the verb, the next to the verb, and the following to the noun in the accusative. 'Tis thus the rules of construction, and not the principles of harmony, decide the arrangement of words in a French period. Transpositions may indeed be admitted in our language in some particular cases; but with two restrictions which the Latins were not subject to. In the first place the VOL. I.

French tongue allows only of the transposition of the members of a period, and not of the words which compose these members. The order of construction must always be observed, which is unnecessary in Latin, where each word may be transposed. Secondly, we require a circumspection in our poets, even when they use such transpositions as are allowed them. Inversions and transpositions that are poetic licences in French, are the common order and disposition of words in the Latin.

And yet the phrases of the French tongue ftand naturally more in need of transpositions to render them harmonious, than those of the Latin. One half of our words terminate in vowels, and of these the silent e is the only one that admits of elifion in case of a concurrence with a vowel which begins the following word. We pronounce therefore without any difficulty fille aimable: but the other vowels which are not struck off, when meeting with a vowel commencing the fublequent word, occasion such a concurrence of found, as is very difagreable in the pronunciation. These concurrences interrupt its continuity, and disconcert its harmony. The following expressions are an instance of this bad effect. L'amitie abandonnée, la fierte opulente, L'ennemi idolatre. We are so well convinced, that the collision of the found of those vowels is difagreable in the pronunciation, that the combination of fuch words are expresly forbidden in the rules of our poetry.

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The Latin transposition leads easily to a discovery of the variety of sounds, and of such a mixture of them, as is most agreable to the ear. Without this variety there can be no true harmony in a period. The finest sounds become disagreable, when they succeed one another by frequent repetition. When they are interrupted by a change, 'tis then they form the ornament of the phrase. It happens also, that some sounds offend the ear, upon striking it immediately after a particular fort of sounds, though they would have pleased had they succeeded immediately after some others. The reacceeded

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fon is, because the foldings, which the organs of speech are obliged to make in order to articulate particular fyllables, do not permit those organs to fold again fo eafily as it is necessary they should, to articulate with ease the subsequent syllables. It has been long fince observed, that the pronunciation which is troublesome to the mouth of the speaker, is of course disagreable to the auditor's ear. Hence we are mechanically offended with the pronunciation of a man, who utters with difficulty fome words of a foreign language, and is frequently obliged to force his organs, in order to fqueeze out founds which he has not the habit of forming. Our first motion, which even the rules of civility in feveral countries are hardly able to suppress, is to laugh and mimic him.

From the reasons hitherto alledged, it may be evidently concluded, that it is much easier for Latin than French writers to form an harmonious alliance of sounds, to range all the words of a phrase in an agreable proximity, and in short to attain to what Quintilian calls inoffensam verborum copulam. This French phrase le pere aime son fils cannot be written in any other order but as I have placed it; whereas the words which compose this phrase, if rendered into Latin, may be

ranged in four different manners.

Thirdly, the rules of Latin poetry are easier to practise than those of the French. The former prescribe a particular metre, and figure to each kind of verse. This figure is composed of a

fixt number of feet, the value of which is regulated. There are rules that limit the number of fyllables in each foot, and likewise the length and brevity of those syllables. When the rule happens to leave the choice of an alternative, that is, the liberty of employing one soot instead of another in the figure; it points out at the same time what is to be done pursuant to the choice that

is agreed upon.

These rules are nothing else in fact but the observations and practice of the best poets reduced to method. Men began to make verses, as Quintilian observes a, before there were any rules to direct them. The first essays were made, without consulting any other rules but the ear. Their resections on those verses, whose numbers and harmony were pleasing, and on such as had a disagreable cadence, were the first origin of the laws of versification. Poetry therefore, like other arts, is nothing more, according to Tully b, than a methodical assemblage of principles established by general consent, in consequence of the observations made on the effects of nature. All nations have had the

a Sicut poema nemo dubitaverit imperito quodam initio susum, Es aurium mensura Es similiter decurrentium spatiorum observatione esse generatum, mox in eo repertos pedes Ante enim carmen ortum est quam observatio carminis. Quint. Inst. 1.9.

b Neque enim ipse versus ratione est cognitus, sed natura atque sensu quem dimensa ratio docuit quid acciderit. Ita notatio natura, & animadversio peperit artem. Cic. in oratore.

fame view in their poetry, but they have not all made use of equal means to attain it.

True it is that the rules of Latin poetry are much more numerous than the French, by reason that they enter into a more particular detail of the nature of versification; but as those rules are delineated, as it were, and their figures expressed by different characters, which mark the quantity of syllables, they are easy to comprehend and not difficult to retain.

A few figures, as the Italian proverb observes, render every thing eafy to be comprehended. Do not we fee in fact, that boys know by heart, and are even capable of reducing to practice the rules of Latin poetry at the age of fifteen, notwithstanding the Latin is to them a foreign language, a language they have learnt by rule and method? When the Latin was a living tongue, those who had a mind to write verses, were already acquainted with the use of quantity; that is, with the length or brevity of syllables. Even now, the difficulty of learning this quantity must not be imputed to the Latin poetry. The knowledge of quantity is requisite even for those that want only the right pronunciation of the Latin; as it is necessary to be acquainted with the quantity of fyllables in our own mother language, to be able to speak it with justness and propriety.

As foon as the rules of the Latin poetry are known, nothing is easier than to range the words pursuant to the rules of a particular metre in this language, which admits of so arbitrary a transposition.

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The construction of our French verses is subject to four rules. In the first place, our verses must be composed of a certain number of fyllables, according to the kind of verse. Secondly, our verses of four, five, or fix feet, ought to have a pause or cæsura. Thirdly, we should avoid the concurrence of those final and initial vowels, which admit of no elifion. And laftly, we must rhime. But the rhime alone becomes, thro' the subjection of the French phrases to the natural order of words, as checking a restraint for an ingenious poet, as all the rules of Latin poetry. In effect we feldom observe, even in the most indifferent Latin poets, those idle epithets that are employed as mere expletives to fill up the verse; but what numbers of them do not we meet with, even in our best poems, introduced by the fole necessity of rhiming? Without enlarging any farther on this article of the difficulty of rhiming, the reader will give me leave to refer him to Boileau's epiftle to Lewis the XIVth on the passage of the Rhine; as also to the epistle written by the same poet to Moliere. There he will fee better than I can tell him, that if rhime be a flave whose duty it is to obey, yet it costs a great deal to reduce this flave to a proper state of subjection.

It is also incumbent upon our poets to obferve the cæsura and number of syllables, and to avoid the concurrence of those which clash with one another. For which reason we see numbers of Frenchmen who write Latin verses S 4 with

with greater ease and fluency than French. Now the less restraint a poet's imagination suffers from the mechanic part of his work, the more this imagination is capable of taking its flight. The less it is confined, the more liberty it has for invention. An artift, who can handle his inftruments with eafe, throws an elegance and propriety into his execution, which another that has not such docile instruments cannot attain to. Wherefore the Latin writers, and particularly their poets, who have not been under the same restraint as ours, have known how to extract graces and beauties from their language, which it is almost impossible for our writers to draw from the French tongue. The Latins, for example, have been able to attain to what I shall call here mimic phrases; for there is a mimickry or imitatation in phrases, as well as in words.

A man who wants words to express some extraordinary noise, or to communicate a sentiment
with which he is touched, recurs naturally to the
expedient of counterseiting this very noise, and
of expressing his sentiments by inarticulate
sounds. We are led by a natural motion to
describe by those inarticulate sounds, the noise
of a house tumbling down; the confused uproar of a tumultuous assembly; the countenance and discourse of a man in a transport of
choler, and several other such like things. Instinct makes us thus supply the sterility of our
language, or the slowness of our imagination.
Those, who are charged with the education of
children,

children, are sensible of the care that is requifite to correct their inclination to these inarticulate sounds, the practice of which we consider as a vicious habit. Men, whose nature has not been improved by education, such as savages and the dregs of the people, frequently use these inarticulate sounds during their whole lives.

I shall therefore give the appellation of mimic phrases to those that imitate, in some manner, such inarticulate sounds, as instinct would teach us to use in conveying the idea of things, which speech expresses by articulate sounds. The Latin authors abound in these mimic phrases, which have been admired and quoted with encomiums by writers of the classic ages. They have been commended by the Romans under the reign of Augustus, who were competent judges of those beauties. Such is the verse of Virgil, in which Poliphemus is described.

Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum.

A monstrous bulk, deform'd, depriv'd of sight.

DRYDEN.

This verse pronounced with a suppression of those syllables that admit of an elision, and with making the u sound in the same manner as the Romans did, becomes, as it were, a monstrous verse. Such is also the following verse of Persius, where he speaks of a snuffler; a verse that can hardly be pronounced without snuffling.

Rancidulum

Rancidulum quiddam balba de nare locutus.

Pers. fat. 1.

Some senseles Phillis, in a broken note

Snuffling at nose, or croaking in his throat.

DRYDEN.

The change which has happened in the pronunciation of the Latin tongue, has thrown a veil, in all probability, over some part of these beauties, but has not concealed them all.

Our poets, who have attempted to inrich their verses with such mimic phrases, have not hit the taste of the French so well as those Latin poets succeeded with the Romans. 'Tis true Pasquier gives us several mimic phrases of the French poets in the chapter of his researches, where he attempts to prove, that the French tongue is as susceptible as the Latin of the fine touches of poetry 2; but the examples produced by Pasquier are sufficient alone to resute his proposition.

In fact, tho' mimic phrases might have been used by some of our poets, yet it is no sort of proof of their goodness. They should have been introduced without prejudicing the sense or the grammatical construction. Now I do not recollect more than one scrap of French poetry of this kind, that can be put in any sort of competition with such numbers of verses, which authors of all ages have commended in the works of those poets who wrote when the Latin was a vulgar language. This is

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the description of an affault in Boileau's Ode on the taking of Namur. The poet paints there in mimic phrases and elegant verses the soldier clambering up a breach.

Sur les monceaux de piques

De corps morts, de rocs, de briques,

S'ouvrir un large chemin.

O'er beaps of stones, and broken limbs

Of rocks, the dauntless soldier goes,

Of belmets, swords, guns, carcasses, the dreadful pomp of woe.

I beg pardon of such of our modern poets as may have been supposed to have equalled Boileau's success in this kind of taste, for not quoting them upon this occasion, as I have not the pleasure of being acquainted with their verses.

The French tongue is not only far from being fo susceptible of these beauties as the Latin, but it has happened also, that we have not made so prosound a study as the Romans, of the value of sounds, of the combination of syllables, of the arrangement of words proper for the producing of particular effects; or finally, of the rhythmus which may result from the composition of these phrases. Were any of our writers to attempt any thing similar to what the Latins have done in this kind, they could expect no manner of assistance from any methodical search already made on this subject. Their only resource would be to con-

fult the ear; but the very best ear is not always fufficient, especially when (to make use of this expression) it has not been cultivated. To fucceed in these attempts, a person should have fixt rules to have recourse to in the heat of his composition; or at least he ought to have made feveral reflections before-hand, and in confequence thereof to have established some regular maxims. The ancients cultivated their foil with care, to which they were encouraged by its fertility. Those who are desirous of seeing into what minute details they have entered upon this subject, and how far they have carried their inquiries, may confult the fourth chapter of the ninth book of Quintilian, Cicero de oratore, and what Longinus has wrote with regard to the choice of words, to the rbythmus and metre in his treatife on the Sublime, and in his prolegomena to Hephæstion's Enchiridium.

My fourth reason is, that the beauties which result from the simple observing of the rules of Latin poetry, are much superior to those that arise from the observing of the rules of French verse.

The observing of the rules of Latin poetry is a necessary cause of numbers in verses composed according to the rules of this poetry. The succession of short and long syllables variously mixt pursuant to the proportion prescribed by art, produces always in Latin such a cadence as the kind of verse requires. The rules of

of Latin poetry are no more than the observations and practice of the best Latin poets, on the arrangement of fyllables necessary for the producing of numbers, reduced to precepts and method. These rules do not indeed ascertain the found of each fyllable; they are fatisfied with determining the arithmetical number of fyllables admitted in each kind of verse, and with pointing out which should be long, and which short, and where 'tis allowable to place either long or short. They tell us indeed, for inftance, that the two last fyllables of an hexameter ought to be long; but they do not mention the found which these two last syllables should have. Wherefore the rules of Latin poetry are not productive of harmony, which is nothing else but an agreable mixture of different founds. It depended on the poet's ear to find out the properest mixture of founds for producing an agreable harmony, fuitable to the fignification of the verse. Hence the verses of Propertius, who had not so delicate an ear as Tibullus, to form a right judgment of the mixture of founds, are less harmonious than those of Tibullus, in the pronunciation of which we feel a particular suavity. With regard to the difference in the cadence of the elegiac verses of those authors, it proceeds from Propertius's affectation in imitating the cadence of the Greek pentameters, which we must not confound with the difference between the harmony of those two poets. But fetting the cadence aside, their verses have, as it were, the same gate, notwithstanding the verses

verses of Propertius do not move with so good a grace as those of Tibullus. Now 'tis saying a vast deal in praise of the rules of Latin poetry, to maintain, that they execute one half and more of the work; and that the poet's car is charged with only one point, that is, with minding to render the verses melodious by a happy mixture of the sound of the syllables of which they are composed. I shall endeavour now to prove, that the observing of the rules of French poetry is productive of neither of those effects; that is, that French verses exactly conformable to those rules, may be destitute of numbers and harmony in the pronunciation.

The rules of French poetry determine only the arithmetical number of fyllables, whereof the verses are to consist. They decide nothing with regard to the quantity that is in poetry, with refpect to the length and brevity of those syllables. But as the fyllables in French words are fometimes long and fometimes short in the pronunciation, there are feveral inconveniences arising from the filence of our rules with respect to their combination. In the first place it happens, that several French verses, which have nothing to be reproached with in point of rules, contain nevertheless too long a fuccession of short or long syllables. Now the too great length of this succession obstructs the numbers in the pronunciation of the verses.

The rbythmus or cadence of a verse, consists in the alternative of long and short syllables varied according according to a particular proportion. Too great a number of long fyllables ranged fuccessively one after another, retards the progression of the verse in the pronunciation. Too great a number of short fyllables succeeding one another immediately, renders it disagreably precipitant.

Secondly, it falls out frequently, that when we have a mind to examine two Alexandrine French verses connected together by the same rhime, with regard to the time in pronouncing each verse, we find an enormous difference between the length of these verses, tho' they are both composed according to the rules. Let ten fyllables out of twelve, which compose a masculine verse, be long; and let ten syllables of the following verse be short; these verses, which will appear equal on paper, will be of a furprizing inequality in the pronunciation. Wherefore these verses, notwithstanding their being allied to one another, and answering by one common rhime, will lose nevertheless all the cadence which might arise from the equality of their measure. Now 'tis not the eye, but the ear which judges of the cadence of verfes.

This inconveniency does not, as I have already observed, attend such as write Latin verses, by reason that the rules prevent it. The arithmetical number of syllables which constitutes each kind of Latin verse, is determined with regard to the length or brevity of these syllables. These rules, which were made from observing

observing the suitable proportion in each kind of verse between the arithmetical number and the quantity of fyllables, decide in the first place, that in the particular feet of a verse we ought to put fyllables of a certain quantity. Secondly, when these rules leave the poet at liberty to employ long or short syllables in a particular part of the verse; they direct him, in case he chuses to use long syllables, to employ then a leffer number of fyllables. If the poet determines in favour of short syllables, he is ordered by the rules to use a greater number. Now as the pronouncing of a long fyllable continues double the space of time to what a short one does; all the Latin hexameters are confequently of the same length in the pronunciation, tho' fome contain a greater number of fyllables than others. The quantity of fyllables is always compensated by their arithmetical number.

Hence the Latin hexameters are always equal in the pronunciation, notwithstanding the variety of their progression; whereas our Alexandrine verses are frequently unequal, tho' they have almost constantly an uniformity of progression. Hence some critics have been of opinion, that it was almost impossible to write a French epic poem of ten thousand verses with any success. True it is, that this uniformity of the rbythmus has not obstructed the success of our dramatic poems in France and foreign countries; but those poems which do not exceed two thousand verses have sufficient excellencies to sustain them, notwithstanding the satiety

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fatiety of the likeness of their numbers. Besides it is less observed on the stage, where these sorts of pieces appear with greatest lustre, by reason that the actors, who generally, before they fetch their breath, run one verse into another; or else fetch it before they have finished the verse, to prevent our being so sensible of the vicious uniformity of its cadence.

What has been here faid with respect to hexameters, may be equally applied to any other kind of verse. Those which run precipitately by reason of their being composed of short syllables, last therefore as long as such as go a very slow pace, because of their being composed of long syllables. For example, Virgil uses short syllables as much as the rules of metre permitted him in that verse, in which he draws so compleat a picture of a courser in sull gallop, that the very sound of the verse makes us imagine we hear the noise of his motion.

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula cam-

The neighing coursers answer to the sound,

And shake with horny hoofs the solid ground.

DRYDEN.

This verse contains seventeen syllables, but it does not continue longer in the pronunciation than the following verse of thirteen, in which Virgil describes the Cyclops at work, and lifting up their arms to strike their hammers on the Vol. I.

274 CRITICAL REFLECTIONS on anvil, an effect which is well represented in the subsequent verse.

Olli inter se multa vi brachia tollunt In numerum, versantque tenaci forcipe massam.

By turns their arms advance, in equal time, By turns their hands descend, and hammers chime, They turn the glowing mass with crooked tongs, The stery work proceeds with rustic songs.

DRYDEN.

Thus the cadence of verse is not at all interrupted by using a greater number of short or long syllables, in order to give a better description of the object.

The art of properly applying long and fhort fyllables, an art fo much cultivated by the ancients, is likewise useful for several other purposes. For example, 'tis observed that Cicero a not chufing to make a frequent use of figures in the recital of the ignominious punishment of a Roman citizen, whom Verres had ordered to be whipped with rods; left he should render himself suspected of declamation, finds a resource in the ductility of his language, to fix his auditor a long time on the image of this punishment. The fact was fo very atrocious, as the bare attending to the narration thereof was fufficient to inflame the auditors, who were to supply the figures themselves. This effect is produced by the flowness, with

. In Verr. att. 5.

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which the plain, and, in all appearance, artless expressions are pronounced, which Cicero adopts in treating of the action against which he endeavours to excite the indignation of his audience.

Cadebatur virgis civis Romanus.

We perceive the art he uses in the different repetitions, which he varies so dexterously to avoid the suspicion of being affected. But let us return to the custom of employing the combination of short and long syllables, to give numbers and cadence

to phrases.

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The Romans were so taken with the effect of numbers, that their prose-writers grew extremely fond thereof, insomuch as to gradually facrifice the sense and energy of their discourse to the numbers and cadence of their language. Cicero observes a, that in his time prose had its measured cadence the same as verse. The essential difference therefore between prose and verse was not, that the latter was confined to a particular measure, and the former at its liberty; but that the metre of prose was different from that of verse. This difference consisted no longer at that time in the old definition of soluta and stricta oratio. Cicero treats likewise of the knowledge of seet, as a thing necessary for actors as well as poets.

Nam etiam poetæ quæssionem attulerunt, quidnam esset illud, quo ipsi different ab oratoribus. Numero videbantur antea maxime & versu. Nunc apud oratores junt ipse numerus increbuit. C10. in oratore.

Quintilian, who wrote about a century later than Cicero, speaks of certain prose-writers of his time, who imagined they had rivalled the greatest orators, when they could boast that their phrases were fo distinctly numerous in the pronunciation, that the declamation thereof might be divided be-The gestures of the one tween two persons. might accompany the recitation of the other. without any danger of mistake; so sensible was the impression of the rbythmus a. But the observations we shall elsewhere make with regard to the recitation of comedians, will give a full light to this passage.

Our French poets, after having observed the rules of our poetry, which require a much greater constraint than those of Latin verse, are forced to rely on the fole affiftance of the ear in the fearch of cadence and harmony. We may judge of the difficulty of this work, only by reflecting, that the transposition of words is not allowed once in twenty times upon those occasions in which the Latin poets were indulged with it. Nevertheless I am far from thinking it impossible for French poets to write harmonious and numerous verses. All I have pretended to maintain is, that the French poets cannot convey fo much harmony and cadence into their verse as the Latins, and that what little they are capable of introducing, is attended with more trouble and pains, than ever those beauties were, which the Latin poets knew

^{*} Laudis & gloriæ & ingenii loco plerique jactant cantari, saltarique commentarios suos. Quint. dialog. de oratore.

POETRY and PAINTING. 27

how to transfuse into their poems. I do not even believe that any modern poet, who has wrote in the languages polished within these three centuries, has attained to a greater cadence and melody than Malherbe; probably at the expence of a satigue and perseverance, for which he was indebted to the province where he was born.

The reader will not find less cadence and harmony in feveral of Abbot Chaulieu's pieces, but especially in his verses to the Marquis de la Fare, and in his letter to the Prince of Auvergne. Whoever will give himself the trouble of pronouncing the verses here mentioned aloud, will soon perceive, that the numbers which suspend the ear in a continued attention, and the harmony which renders this attention agreable, and compleats, as it were, the conquest of the ear, have a much greater effect than all the riches of rhime. Besides. ought not the whimfical toil of rhiming to be looked upon as the lowest function of the mechanic part of poetry? But fince the poet cannot get this piece of drudgery performed by others, as the painter can have his colors pounded, it is proper for us to fay fomething concerning this fubject.

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CHAP.

C H A P. XXXVI.

Of RHIME.

HERE is no rule in poetry, whose obfervance costs so much trouble, and produces so sew beauties in verse, as that of rhiming.
Rhime frequently maims, and almost always enervates the sense of the discourse. For one bright
thought which the passion of rhiming throws in
our way by chance, it is certainly every day the
cause of a hundred others, which people would
blush to make use of, were it not for the richness
or novelty of the rhime, with which these thoughts
are attended.

And yet the allurement of rhime has nothing in it worth comparing to the charms of numbers and harmony. The terminating of a fyllable with a particular found, is no beauty of itself. The beauty of rhime is only a relative one, which confifts in a conformity of termination between the last words of two corresponding verses. ornament therefore, which is of fo short a duration, is perceived only at the end of two verses, and after having heard the last word of the second verse which rhimes to the first. One is not even fenfible of this pleasure, but at the end of three or four verses, if the masculine and feminine rhimes are interwoven, fo that the first and fourth be masculines, and the second and third feminines; a mixture which is very much used in several kinds of poetry.

But to confine our discourse to those verses in which rhime shines forth in all its lustre and beauty, the richness thereof discovers itself only at the end of the second verse. 'Tis the greater or lesser conformity of sounds between the two last words of the two verses which forms its elegance. Now the most part of those who are not themselves of the profession, or tho of the profession, are not particularly fond of rhime, do not, upon hearing the second rhime, recollect the first distinctly enough to be charmed with their perfection. Their merit is known rather by resection than sensation, so tristing is the pleasure by which it tickles the ear.

Some perhaps will fay, that there must certainly be a much greater beauty in rhime than I pretend to allow. The consent of all nations (they will add) is a sensible proof in favor of rhime; the use of which is at present universally adopted.

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My answer is in the first place, that I do not contest the agreableness of rhime; I only look upon this agreableness in a much inferior light to that which arises from the numbers and harmony of verse, and which shews itself continually during the metrical pronunciation. Numbers and harmony are a light which throws out a constant lustre, but rhime is a mere flash, which disappears after having given only a short-liv'd splender. In fact the richest rhime has but a very trandom

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fient effect. Were we even to rate the value of verses only by the difficulties that are to be furmounted in the making of them, 'tis less difficult, without comparison, to rhime completely than to compose numerous and harmonious verses. In aiming at the latter, we meet with obstacles at every word. Nothing extricates a French poet out of these difficulties, but his genius, his ear, and perseverance; for he has no affistance to expect from any method hitherto reduced to art. These obstructions do not occur so frequently, when a person proposes only to rhime well; and besides, in endeavouring to furmount them, he meets with the affiftance of a dictionary of rhimes, that favourite book of all fevere rhimers. For let these gentlemen fay what they will, there are none of them but what have this excellent work in their studies.

Secondly, I grant that we hime all our verfes, and that our neighbours do likewise most
part of theirs. We find the use of rhime established even in Asia and America. But the greatest part of these people are barbarians, and the
rhiming nations that have been since civilized,
were barbarous and illiterate when their poetry
was first formed. The languages they spoke
were not susceptible of a greater perfection of
verse, when they laid, as it were, the first foundations of their poetry. True it is, that the European nations here spoken of became, in process
of time, a polite and learned people. But as they
polished themselves not 'till a long time after
they

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they had been formed into a body politic, and as their national customs were already settled, and even strengthened by the length of time they had been standing, when these nations received the improvements arising from a judicious culture of the Greek and Latin tongues; those customs have therefore been polished and mended, but could never be intirely altered. An architect, who has undertaken to repair an old Gothic building, may make some alterations to render it more commodious, but he cannot alter the defects which arise from the first construction. He cannot shape it into a regular building without pulling down the old one in order to erect a new edifice upon a different plan.

Wherefore those excellent poets who have worked upon this structure in France and in our neighbouring countries, may, 'tis true, have improved and imbellished this modern poetry; but it was impossible for them to alter its conformation, which had its foundation in the nature and genius of the modern tongues. The attempts which learned poets have made in France, from time to time, to change the rules of our poetry, and to introduce the practice of measured verses in imitation of the Greeks and Romans, have not

met with the defired fuccefs.

Rhime, as well as fiefs and duels, owes its origin to the barbarousness of our ancestors. The people, from whom the modern nations are defcended, and who subverted the Roman empire, had already their poets, tho' barbarians, when they

they first settled in Gaul and other provinces of the empire. As the languages, in which those ignorant poets wrote, were not sufficiently improved to bear handling according to the rules of metre, nor even admitted of attempting it; they fancied there would be some ornament in terminating with the same sound, two consecutive or relative parts of a discourse, both of which were to be of an equal extent. This identity of sinal sounds, repeated at the end of a certain number of syllables, formed a kind of grace, and seemed to express, or did, if you please, express something of a cadence in verse. Thus it was in all probability, that rhime first rose and established itself in Europe.

In the countries invaded by the barbarians, another fort of people were formed, composed of the mixture of these new comers with the ancient inhabitants. The customs of the predominant nation prevailed in many things; and especially in the common language, which was formed of that spoken by the ancient inhabitants, and that which was used by the new comers. For example, the new language in Gaul, where the ancient inhabitants commonly spoke Latin when the Franks first fettled there, preserved only some words derived from the Latin. The syntax of this language, as we have before observed, was intirely different from that of the Latin tongue. short the new-born language was forced to Submit to the flavery of rhiming, and this very rhime passed into the Latin tongue; the use of which

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which was retained by a particular fet of people. The practice of Leonine verses (which are Latin verses in rhime, like our French ones) was introduced as early as the eighth century, and prevailed at the time when the following ones were made.

Fingitur bac specie bonitatis odore refertus Istius ecclesiæ fundator rex Dagobertus.

These Leonine verses disappeared together with ignorance, upon the rising of that light whose dawn appeared in the sisteenth century.

CHAP. XXXVII.

That the words of our own native language make a greater impression upon us, then those of a foreign tongue.

Is an uncontestable proof of the superiority of Latin verses over French, that they move and affect Frenchmen who understand Latin, much more than French verses are capable of moving them. And yet the impression of the words of a foreign language, is a great deal seebler than that which is made by the expressions of our mother tongue. Since therefore Latin verses have a greater effect upon us than French; it follows, of course, that they are persecter, and more capable

of affording us pleasure. Latin verses cannot be naturally supposed to strike a French ear, in the same manner as they did the Romans; nor have they the same power, which French verses should have

by right upon the ears of Frenchmen.

The words of our language have only a bare arbitrary connexion with their ideas, unless it be a very fmall number which may pass for mimic or imitative expressions. This connexion is the effect of caprice or hazard. For example, they might have annexed in our language the idea of a horse to the word soliveau, and that of a rafter, which it fignifies, to the word cheval. Now 'tis only during the infant years of our life, that the connexion between a particular word and its idea is imprinted fo well, that this word feems to us to have a natural energy; that is, a particular propriety in fignifying a thing, whereof it is notwithstanding only an arbitrary sign. Thus, as we have learnt from our infancy the fignification of the word aimer, to love, as this word is the first we have retained for expressing the thing of which it is the fign, it appears to us to have a natural energy; tho' the force we discover in it, proceeds intirely from our education, and from its having feized, as it were, the first place in our memory.

It even happens, that when we learn a foreign language after having attained to a certain age, we do not immediately refer the words of this language to their proper ideas, but to fuch words of our own mother tongue, as are connected with those ideas. Thus a Frenchman, who is

learning

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learning English, does not presently affix to the English word God, the idea of Dieu; but to the word Dieu. When he hears afterwards the word God pronounced, the idea which immediately arises is that of the signification which this word hath in French. The idea of God rises only in the second place; and it seems as if he were obliged at first to translate the word God inwardly into French.

Let people treat this explication as a piece of metaphyfical fubtlety, if they pleafe, it is notwithstanding absolutely true, that when our imagination has not been early accustomed to represent to us readily certain ideas, upon the hearing of particular founds, these words make a much weaker and flower impression upon us, than those which our organs have been habituated to from our infancy. The effect which words produce, depends on the mechanical fpring of our organs, and confequently it should depend on the facility as well as promptitude of their movements. Hence the fame discourse has a quicker influence upon a man of a lively imagination, than upon a person of a slow heavy disposition, tho' they interest themselves afterwards both alike in the thing proposed to them.

Experience, which has a much greater weight than bare reasonings in matters of fact, convinces us sufficiently of this truth. A Frenchman who understands Spanish, only as a foreign language, is not as much affected with the word querer, as with

with aimer, tho' they both fignify the fame

And yet Latin verses please and affect us more than those that are composed in French. The testimony of foreigners cannot be refused in this cafe, to whom the use of the French tongue is grown much more familiar in our days than that of the Latin. They feem all to agree, that they are much less pleased and affected with French verses than with Latin ones, notwithstanding the greatest part of them have learnt French before Latin. The French themselves, that have a fufficient knowledge of the Latin to understand with eafe the poets who have wrote in this language, are of the fame opinion. Upon a suppofition that two poets, one French and the other Latin have treated the fame subject, and with equal success the Frenchmen abovementioned will find greater pleafure in reading the Latin verses. Monsieur Bourbon's jest on this occasion is very well known, who used to say, That be imagined himself drinking water whilft be was reading French verses. In fine, both French and foreigners. I mean those who are as well acquainted with our language as ourselves, and have been educated with a Horace in one hand, and with a Boileau in the other, cannot bear to hear of a comparison between French and Latin verses mechanically confidered. There must be therefore some superior excellence in Latin verses to what we can discover in the French. A foreigner who meets

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meets with preferment at court, fooner than a person who is a native of the country, is supposed to have more morit than the rival whom he is preferred to.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

That the painters of Raphael's time had no advantage over those of our days. Of the ancient painters.

Whenever they are forced to undergo a comparison with the Latin poets, who had so many helps to forward their success, which the French poets are deprived of. They may make the same answer as Quintilian does for the Latin poets to those critics, who seemed to require of the Latin writers a power of moving equal to that of the Greeks: "Let our language, says he, be as fertile in expressions, and as agreable in the pronunciation, as that of the people whom you would have us rival, in order to merit your esteem." An architect, who builds only with brick, cannot raise so sumptuous an edifice, as with stone or marble. Our painters

Det mibi in loquendo eandem jucunditatem & parem co-

are much happier in this respect than our poets. The painters of our days employ the same colors and instruments, as were used by those whose works are esteemed to have a superior excellence over any of our present performers. Our painters compose, as it were, at present in the same language as their predecessors. When I mention the predecessors of the painters of our days, I do not mean the painters of the time of Alexander the Great, nor those who flourished under Augustus. We are not sufficiently acquainted with the mechanical detail of ancient painting, to draw a parallel thereof with the mechanic part of modern painting. By the predecessors of our painters, I mean to speak only of those, who have appeared fince the recovery of letters.

I know not of any one piece done by the painters of ancient Greece, which has been preserved down to our times. The pieces that are extant of the painters of ancient Rome, are in so small a quantity, and likewise of so particular a quality, that it is very difficult to judge from thence, of the abilities of the best artists of those times, or of the colors which they employed. We cannot positively tell, whether they had any colors which we have not; but 'tis very probable that they had not the colors which our artists draw from America and some other countries, with which Europe has had a settled commerce only within these two centuries.

A great number of fragments of antique painting were done in Mosaic; that is, in a kind of painting wrought with small coloured stones, and sharp pointed bits of glass measured and proportioned together, so as to imitate in their affemblage the strokes and color of the objects, which they were intended to represent. We fee, for example, in the palace, which the Barberini family built in the town of Palestrina, at twenty five miles distance from Rome, a great piece of Mosaic about twelve feet long, and ten deep, which ferves for a pavement to a kind of niche, the vault whereof fustains the two feparate flights, which lead to the first landing place of the principal stair-case. This superb fragment is a kind of map of Egypt, and is pretended to be the very fame pavement which Sylla caused to be made in the temple of Fortune at Præneste, which Pliny makes mention of in the twenty fifth chapter of the thirty fixth book of his history. It is ingraved in miniature in father Kircher's Latium; but in 1721 Cardinal Charles Barberini had it ingraved in four large fheets. The ancient artist made use of several flourishes to imbellish this piece, such as geographers employ frequently to fill up the void spaces of their maps. These flourishes represent men, beafts, buildings, hunting-matches, and feveral ceremonies and points of the moral and natural history of ancient Egypt. The names of such things as are there painted are written on the top VOL. I.

in Greek characters, in the same manner pretty near as the names of provinces are written in a

general map of the kingdom of France.

Pouffin has made use of some of these compofitions to imbellish several of his pictures, and among the rest that which represents the arrival of the facred family in Egypt. This great painter was yet living, when this fuperb piece of Mosaic was dug out from amidst the ruins of a temple of Serapis, which must have been, pursuant to our manner of speaking, a chappel of the famous temple of Fortune at Praneste. Every body knows that the ancient Præneste was the same city as the modern Palestrina. This piece of Mosaic was by good luck extracted intire, and in very good condition; but unluckily for the curious, it did not rife out of its tomb till five years after Monsieur Suarez, bishop of Vaissons, had published his work intitled Pranestes antiqua libri duo a. The map abovementioned was then buried in the vaults of the bishop's palace at Palestrina, where it remained almost invisible. The curious could perceive some small matter of it, by dint of washing the parts already discovered; tho' not without the help of torches. Wherefore Monsieur Suarez could give us no more than b the description of fome fragments which Cavalier del Pozzo had caused to be drawn upon the spot c.

[•] Printed at Rome in the year 1655.

Prænest. Antiq. lib. prim. p. 50.

c Ibid. 1. 2. p. 228.

There are still to be seen at Rome and in various parts of Italy feveral fragments of the ancient Mosaic, the greatest part whereof have been ingraved by Pietro Santi Bartoli, who has inferted them in his different collections. But there are many reasons to conclude we should form a wrong judgment of the paintings of the ancients, were we to ground it on these Mosaics. The curious are convinced we should not do justice to Titian, were we to judge of his merit by fuch of those Mosaic pieces of the church of St Mark at Venice, as were done from the defigns of this great master of colors. 'Tis impossible to express with pebbles and fcraps of glass, such as the ancients made use of to paint in Mosaic, all the beauties and graces, which the pencil of an able artist bestows on a picture, where he is master of veiling the colors, and of doing on every physical point whatever his fancy pleases, as well with regard to the touches, as to the teints. In fact, the Mosaic pieces which are most cried up, and which at a certain distance are taken for pictures done with the pencil, have been copied from simple portraits. Such is the portrait of pope Paul the Vth, which is to be seen at Rome in the palace of the Borghese Family.

Even in Rome itself there are very sew antique pictures that have been done with the pencil. The sollowing are those which I remember to have seen. In the first place the wedding of the Villa Aldobrandina, and the little sigures of the pyramid of Cestius. There are very sew virtuosos, but have seen at least

the prints of these pieces. Secondly, the pictures preserved in the palace belonging to the Barberini family at Rome, which were found in the fubterraneous grottos, when they laid the foundation of that palace. These pictures are the landskip or the Nymphæum whereof Lucas Holstenius published a print with an explanation; as also the Venus repaired by Carlo Maratti; and a picture of Rome holding Victory. The connoisseurs that are not acquainted with the history of these two frescos, take one for a piece done by Raphael, and the other by Correggio. There is also in palace Farnese a piece of antique painting, found in the emperor Adrian's villa at Tivoli, and the remains of a cieling in a private person's garden near St Gregory's. Since the first edition of this work several other antique paintings have been found in the Villa Farnese on mount Palatine, in the same place where the emperors palace formerly stood. These paintings ornamented the cieling of a bathing room; but neither the Duke of Parma, to whom they belonged, nor the King of the two Sicilies, who has removed them fince to Naples, have had them yet ingraved. Dr Mead, a gentleman fo celebrated throughout Europe for his abilities and his love for the polite arts, has inriched his cabinet with a piece of antique painting, which was also found in the ruins of the imperial palace at Rome; and he has caufed this precious fragment to be ingraved. It represents, as we have reason to imagine, the emperor Augustus with Agrippa, Mæcenas, and some other persons by his side, placing a crown on the head of

of a figure which is now defaced. The Marquiss Capponi, who has joined to a great share of learning a singular taste for the study of antiquity, has also ingraved a very singular piece of ancient painting from his own cabinet. 'Tis the portrait of an architect with the instruments of his art lying by him. This picture was discovered in an old tomb.

There were feveral other fragments of antique paintings fome time ago in the buildings, commonly comprized under the name of Titus's therme or hot-baths; but some of them have perished, as the picture of Coriolanus with his mother diffuading him from his refolution to attack the city of Rome, the defign of which done by Annibal Carraccio and fince ingraved, is now in the possession of Monsieur Crozat who had it of Canon Vittoria: and others have been fince stolen. 'Tis from thence also that Cardinal Massimi took the four pieces, which are fupposed to represent the history of Adonis, and two other fragments. These learned remains fell after his decease into the hands of the Marquiss Maffimi, and the prints thereof are to be feen in Monsieur de la Chausse's book, intitled, a the antique paintings of the Roman grottos. The author has given us in this work feveral defigns of antique paintings, which the public never had been favouted with before; and among the rest, that of the cieling of a chamber which was dug up near St Stephen in Rotunda in the year 1705; that is, a year before the edition of his work. The

Le pitture antiche delle grotte di Roma.

figure of a woman drawn on a piece of stucco, which belonged to Canon Vittoria, is now at Paris in the possession of Monsieur Crozat junior.

As for what remains there are in Titus's therma, these are reduced to some sew half-defac'd paintings. Father Mountsaucon and Francis Bartoli have given us a print of the most intire fragment that is to be seen there, which is the representation of a landskip.

There was likewise extant in the year 1702, in the ruins of ancient Capua, at about a league's distance from the modern city of that name, a cripto-porticus, or buried gallery, the roof whereof was painted, and represented figures wrought in different ornaments. In the year 1709, prince Emmanuel of Elbeuf, whilst his people were at work upon his country-house, situated between Naples and mount Vesuvius, on the sea-shore, discovered a building adorned with several antique paintings; but I have not heard that the design of these has been yet published, no more than of those of ancient Capua.

I do not know of any other antique fragments done with a pencil, that are still extant, except those above-mentioned. True it is, that within these two last centuries there have been a much larger number dug up either at Rome, or in other parts of Italy; but I know not by what fatality the greatest part of them have perished, and we have only their designs remaining. Cardinal Massimi made an excellent

2 Diar. Ital. p. 132. , b Petture antiche.

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collection of these designs, and by a very odd adventure he brought from Spain the most valuable part of his collection to Rome a. During his nunciature he had procured a copy of a porto folio in the king of Spain's cabinet, which contained the defigns of feveral antique paintings found at Rome, when people commenced in the fixteenth century to rummage eagerly into ruins, in order to discover the shattered remains of antiquity. Cavalier del Pozzo, whose name is fo famous among the lovers of painting, that very gentleman for whom Poulfin drew his first pieces of the Seven Sacraments, had also made a very handsome collection of antique defigns, which pope Clement XI. purchased during his pontificate, to place them in his own private library.

But almost all the paintings, from which these designs were drawn, are intirely lost. Those of the tombs of the Naso family which were dug up near Pontemole in the year 1674, are no longer existing. We have nothing left of the paintings of this Mausoleum, except the coloured copies, which were done for Monsieur Colbert and Cardinal Massimi, and the prints ingraved by Pietro Santi Bartoli, which with the explications of Bellori make a volume in solio printed at Rome. As for the original paintings of those tombs, the vestiges thereof were scarce remaining forty years ago, tho' care had been taken to rub

² This collection of defigns passed over afterwards into England, and is now in the possession of Dr Mead.

In the year 1680.

them with a tincture of garlick, proper for the preserving of frescos. Notwithstanding this precaution, they have been intirely ruined by time.

Antiquarians pretend, that this is the deftiny of all fuch antique paintings as have been interred during a great number of years in places where the external air could have no access; for this destroys them directly, as soon as they are exposed again to it's action; whereas it damages those that have been buried in places where it had a free communication, only as it hurts all other paintings done in fresco. Wherefore the paintings that were discovered about twenty years ago in the Villa Corfini built on the Janiculcum, ought to have lasted a long time. The external air had preferved a free access in the tombs whose walls they imbellished; but thro' the fault of the proprietor they were very short-lived; tho' by good luck we have the prints thereof ingraved by Bartoli a. But this misfortune is likely to happen no more; for Pope Clement XIth, who had an extraordinary taste for the polite arts, and was a very great lover of antiquities, not having had it in his power to prevent the deftruction of the paintings of Villa Corfini under a preceding pontificate, was refolved that the curious should not reproach his with the like accidents, which they consider as very unlucky disasters. He ordered therefore an edict to be published by Cardinal John Baptist Spinola, great Chamberlain of the Holy See, by which all proprietors of places, where any vestiges of antique painting should be found, were forbidden to demolish the masonry,

without express leave.

'Tis obvious that one cannot without temerity undertake a parallel between ancient and modern painting, on the strength and credit of these antique fragments which have been so much injured by time. Besides, these few remains were not done 'till a long time after the death of the celebrated painters of Greece. 'tis manifest from the writings of the ancients, that the painters who worked at Rome under Augustus and his first successors, were much inferior to the famous Apelles, and his illustrious cotemporaries. Pliny, who composed his history under Vespasian, and when the arts had attained already to the highest degree of perfection under the emperors, does not mention among those pictures, which he considers as some of the chief ornaments of the capital of the universe, any one piece which we can, from reasons by him furnished, imagine to have been drawn during the time of the Cæfars. We cannot therefore build on the remaining fragments of antique painting, which are only the ruins of works done at Rome under the emperors, any fixt judgment concerning the degree of perfection, to which the Greeks and ancient Romans have carried this delightful art. We cannot even determine by these fragments, to what degree of perfection the art was arrived at the time of their drawing.

Before

Before we can judge from a particular picture. of the state in which the art was, when that piece was done, one should know positively in what degree of esteem it was at that time, and whether it passed for a master piece in its kind. What injustice, for example, would it not be to our age, if people were to judge hereafter of our present state of dramatic poetry from the tragedies of Pradon and from Hauteroche's comedies? Even in the times most celebrated for excellent artifts, there have been always a greater number of indifferent ones; and generally more bad than good performances. Now we should run the risk of giving a wrong judgment upon the credit and strength of one of those indifferent performances; if, for example, we should attempt to decide in what state the art of painting was at Rome under the reign of Augustus, by the figures that are in the pyramid of Cestius; tho' it be very probable, that these figures painted in fresco were done at the fame time the Mausoleum was erected, and consequently under the reign of that emperor. We cannot tell what rank the artist that drew them, might have held among the painters of his time; and what passes at present in all countries informs us fufficiently, that a party-interest frequently causes the most considerable undertakings to be given to artists of much inferior abilities to those whose superior merit is neglected.

We may indeed compare the antique sculpture with ours, because we are certain of our having at this present time the master-pieces of the Greek

sculpture;

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sculpture; that is, the very choicest pieces of antiquity. The Romans in the time of their greatest splendor, which was under the reign of Augustus, contested nothing with the Greeks but the knowledge of government. They acknowledged them their masters in the polite arts, and particularly in that of sculpture.

Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra,
Credo equidem, vivos ducent de marmore vultus.
Tu regere imperio populos Romane memento,
Hæ tibi erunt artes.

VIRG. Æneid. 6.

Let others better mold the running mass
Of metals, and inform the breathing brass,
And soften into flesh a marble face.
But Rome, 'tis thine alone, with awful sway
To rule mankind, and make the world obey;
These are imperial arts and worthy thee.

DRYDEN.

Pliny is of the same opinion as Virgil. But the most precious curiosities of Greece were transported to Rome, and we are sure of our having at present the most beautiful performances, that were in the capital of the world, after it had been inriched with the most valuable master-pieces, that ever came from the hands of the Greek artists. Pliny a takes very particular notice of the statue of Hercules, which is now in the court-yard of

the palace Farnese, and Pliny wrote at a time when Rome had stripped already the East of one of the finest pieces of sculpture that were then at Rome. This fame author informs us also a that the Laocoon which is now feen in the court-yard of the palace of Belveder, was the most precious piece of sculpture at Rome in his time. The character which Pliny gives the statues that compose the group of Laocoon, the place where he fays they were at the time he wrote, which is the very fame place where they were dug up above two centuries ago, render it certain, notwithstanding the scruples of some antiquarians, that these statues are the same as those mentioned by Pliny. Thus we are qualified to judge whether the ancients surpassed us in the art of sculpture. parties at law, if I may be indulged this phrase, have produced their writings to prove their respective titles. Now I never heard of fentence being given in favour of the modern sculptors. I never heard, for example, of Michael Angelo's Moses being preferred to the Laocoon of Belveder. notwithstanding, it would be imprudent to maintain that the ancient Greek and Roman Painters furpaffed ours, because the ancient sculptors excelled the moderns.

Painting and sculpture, 'tis true, are two sisters, but this does not produce so strict an union betwixt them, that their fates must be in every respect alike. Sculpture, tho' only a younger sister might have left the elder sister far behind her.

It would be no less temerity to decide this question from our pictures not having such a prodigious effect upon us as the antique pieces are faid to have fometimes produced: Probably the accounts given by the writers who registered those effects are exaggerated, and we are incapable of knowing what abatement to make, in order to reduce them to the exact standard of truth. We know not what share the novelty of the art of painting might have had in the impression, which some pictures are reported to have made on the spectators. The first paintings, tho' grossly done, must have appeared like divine performances. The admiration which follows a rifing art, throws those who mention its productions very eafily into exaggeration; and tradition, upon collecting those hyperbolical narratives, has fometimes rendered them more marvellous than she received them. We find in ancient writers feveral impossible things afferted for truth, and ordinary events treated as prodigies. Besides, can we tell what effect several pieces of Raphael, Rubens, and Annibal Carracio, would have produced on men of so exquisite a fensibility, and so susceptible of passion, as were most of the countrymen of the ancient painters of Greece?

In fine, one cannot give a distincter idea of pictures to those that have not seen them, and who are not acquainted with the peculiar manner of the painter that drew them; than by the way of comparison. We ourselves, when we happen to talk to a person concerning the works

works of a painter whom he has no knowledge of. are moved by instinct to make use of this method of comparison. We give the idea of a strange painter, by comparing him with fuch painters as are known; and this is the best way of describing fensible objects. He colors, we fay, very like fuch a one; he designs like such a person; he composes like such another. Now we have no fuch thing as the comparative fentiment of a perfon who had feen the works of the ancient painters of Greece, and those of the moderns. We do not even fo much as know what comparison might have formerly been made between the remaining fragments of antique painting, and those fine pictures of Greece which are no longer extant.

The modern writers who have treated of this fubject; render us more learned, without enabling us to decide the question of superiority between the ancient and modern painters. These writers are fatisfied with collecting fuch paffages of the ancients as treat of painting, and with writing comments on them as philologists, without explaining them by an enquiry into the performances of the painters of our days, and even without applying those passages to the remaining fragments of antique painting. I am therefore of opinion, that in order to form as distinct an idea as possible of the performances of the ancients, we ought to confider separately all we can know for certain with respect to their composition, their expression, and their colouring.

We

We have thought proper in this work to divide the ordonnance into picturesque and poetic composition. With respect to the former, we must acknowledge, that in those monuments which are extant, the ancient painters do not feem superior, nor even equal to Raphael, Rubens, Paolo Veronese, or Monsieur Le Brun. Upon supposition that the ancients had done nothing better in this kind than the baffo-relievos, and the medals and paintings, which have been transmitted down to us, they certainly fell short of the moderns. Not to mention feveral other defects of the ancient composers, their perspective is generally bad. Monsieur de la Chausse a in speaking of the landskip of Titus's thermæ, says, From this picture it is plain, that the ancients were as unhappy in their perspective, as they were learned in their designing.

As for the poetic composition, the ancients piqued themselves prodigiously for excelling in their inventions; and as they were great designers, they had all forts of helps to facilitate their success. In order to give an idea of the progress they had made in this part of painting, which comprizes the great art of the expressions, we shall relate here what the ancient writers mention concerning it; for of all the different parts of painting, the poetic composition is much the easiest described.

² Da questa pittura si conosce che gli Antichi sono stati altretanto infelici nella prospettiva, ch' eruditi nel disegno. Pittur. antich. p. 13.

Pliny, who has spoken more methodically of painting than other writers, reckons the expression and other poetic inventions as a very great merit in an artift. 'Tis evident from his accounts, that this part of the art was in great efteem among the ancients, and that it was cultivated amongst them as much as in the Roman school. This author relates as an important piece of history, that it was a Theban, by name Aristides, who first shewed it was possible to paint the motions of the foul, and to express the sentiments with strokes and colors in a mute figure; in short, that there was an art of speaking to the eyes. mentioning likewife a picture of Ariftides, which represented a woman stabbed with a poniard, with a fucking child at her breaft, expresses himself with as much taste and emotion, as Rubens could have done were he talking of a fine picture of Raphael's. One fees, fays he, on this woman's dejected countenance, already feized with the fymptoms of approaching death, the liveliest fentiments, and the most eager sollicitude of maternal tenderness. Her apprehension lest the child should receive harm by fucking of blood instead of milk, was so perfectly marked on the mother's visage, the whole attitude of her body accompanied this expression in so accurate a manner, that it was easy to conceive what thought must have employed the dying parent.

'Tis not so easy to speak of the expression in the manner as Pliny and other ancient writers have done without having seen a great number of excellent

pieces

pieces in this branch of painting. Besides, those statues on which so learned and correct an expression was exhibited, as on that of Laocoon, the Grinder, &c. must have naturally rendered the ancients very knowing and even delicate with regard to the expression. As they had an infinite number of other pieces, besides the statues above-mentioned, from whence they could draw most excellent comparisons, they could not therefore be subject to mistake in judging of the expression in pictures, nor take a mediocrity in this kind for an exquisite degree of performance.

We meet likewise in Pliny with a large number of facts and details, which prove that the ancient painters valued themselves for excelling in the expression, at least as much as those of the Roman school. The greatest part of the commendations given by the ancient authors to fuch pictures as they mention, have a relation to the expression. 'Tis on this account that Ausonius extols the Medea of Timomachus, where Medea was drawn in the attitude of lifting up her poniard to stab her children. We behold, fays Aufonius, rage and compassion mixt together on her countenance, and amidst the fury which transports her to commit so detestable a murder, we may still descry the remains of a maternal tenderness.

Immanem exhausit rerum in diversa laborem, Pingeret affectum matris ut ambiguum. Ira subest lachrymis, miseratio non caret irâ, Alterutrum videas ut sit in alterutro.

'Tis known with what transport Pliny commends the ingenious stroke of Timanthes, who drew Agamemnon with his head veiled at the facrifice of Iphigenia, to signify that he had not attempted to express the affliction of the father of this young victim. Quintilian mentions this invention in the same manner as Pliny, and several other ancient writers speak of it as Quintilian a, who proposes it as a stroke which may serve as a model for orators.

We have an admirable description in Lucian b of a grand composition, which represented the marriage of Alexander and Roxana. This picture must have assuredly surpassed for the graces of invention, and for the elegance of its allegories, the most smiling compositions of Albano. Roxana lay reclined on her couch: The beauty of this young lady, heightened by her virgin blush, which made her cast down her eyes at the approach of Alexander, drew upon her the first

^{*} Ut secit Timanthes Nam cum in Iphigeniæ immolatione pinxisset tristem Calchantem, tristiorem Ulyssem, addidisset Menelao quem summum poterat efficere ars mærorem: consumptis affectibus, non reperiens quo dignè modo patris vultum posset exprimere, velavit ejus caput & suo cuique animo dedit æstimandum. Quint. Inst. 1. 2.

b In Herodoto.

looks of the spectator. It was an easy matter to diftinguish by her presence, that she was the principal figure in the picture. Round her little Cupids preffed follicitously to serve her. Some took off her flippers, and others helped to pull off her cloaths. Another lifted up her veil, that her lover might have a better view of her face, and addressing his smiles to that prince, he seemed to congratulate him upon the charms of his mistress. Some of them seized on Alexander dressed in armour, and led him towards Roxana, in the posture of a man desirous of laying his crown at the feet of the dear object of his passion. Hephestion, a confident of the intrigue, leant upon Himeneus, to shew that the services he had done his master had been calculated to procure a legitimate union between Alexander and Roxana. A troop of pleasant Cupids played in one of the corners of the picture with the arms of this prince. This enigma was not difficult to unriddle, and it could have been wished that our modern painters had never invented an obscurer allegory. Some of these Cupids carried Alexander's lance, and feemed to bend under the weight of fo heavy a burthen. Others played with his shield, on which they carried in triumph the little Cupid who had given the pleafing wound; while another, who lay in ambush in Alexander's cuirafs, waited for them in their paffage, in order to frighten them. This Cupid in ambuscade might have alluded to some other mistress of Alexander, or to some of this prince's mi-X 2

nisters who intended to traverse the marriage of Roxana. A poet would be apt to say, that the God Hymen thought himself under an obligation of recompencing the painter who had so elegantly celebrated one of his triumphs. This ingenious artist exposed his picture during the solemnity of the Olympic games, and Pronexides, who must have been a man of distinction, by having the direction of the feast that year, gave his daughter away in marriage to the painter. Raphael has not thought it beneath him to sketch this very subject described by Lucian; and his design has been ingraved by one of the disciples of the famous Marco Antonio.

The ingenious author a, of whom I have borrowed this hiftory, bestows likewise a very particular encomium on the poetic composition of one of Zeuxis's pictures, reprefenting the family of a Centaur. But it is unnecessary to make any further quotations from the ancient writers. Who can question, after having seen the figures of the group of Laocoon, but the ancients excelled in the art which infuses a foul into marble, and lends speech to colors? There is never a lover of polite arts but has feen at least the copies of the figure of an expiring gladiator, which was formerly in the Villa Ludovisi, and has been since transferred to the Palace of Prince Chigi. This wretch, wounded mortally with the thrust of a fword, is sitting on the ground, and has yet strength enough still left

² LUCIAN in his Zeuxis.

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Who is it that has not heard of the celebrated group, which is still to be seen in the Villa Ludovisi, and represents a famous event in the Roman history, namely the adventure of young Papirius b? Every body knows, that this boy having stay'd one day with his father, while the senate were assembled, his mother put several ques-

² Quis mediocris gladiator ingemuit? Quis vultum mutavit unquam? Quis non modo stetit, verum etiam decubuit turpiter? Cic. Tusc. quæst. 1. 2.

b Aulus Gellius, l. 1. c. 2.

tions to him upon his coming home, in order to discover what had been there transacted: for this she did not expect to hear from her husband; as the Romans were not yet so complaisant to their wives. The mother could never get more than one answer from her son, which left her no room to doubt but his intention was to elude her curiosity. He resolutely replied, that the senate had debated, whether each husband should have two wives, or each wife two husbands. This incident gave rise to the Latin proverb, Curia capax pratexta, which is used when speaking of a child that has discretion far superior to his age.

Never was there a fentiment better expressed than the curiofity of the mother of young Papirius. The foul of this woman feems to be intirely feated in her eyes, which pierce through her fon while the careffes him. The attitude of all the parts of her body concurs with her eyes, and plainly indicates her intention. With one hand The careffes the youth, while the other feems contracted. This is a motion very natural to those who strive to suppress the figns of their inquietude just ready to break loofe. The young Papirius answers his mother with a seeming complaifance; but 'tis visible this complaisance is only affected. Tho' his air be open, tho' his carriage appears ingenuous, we may guess by the sliness of his fmile, which is not quite formed, but is formewhat restrained by respect, that the boy is willing the should rely on his veracity, while he is far from

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from being fincere. We see he promises to tell her the truth, tho' it is at the same time visible he deceives her. Four or five touches, which the painter has artfully drawn on his face, and something very particular observable in the action of his hands, bely the openness and sincerity, which otherwise appears in his gesture and countenance.

We may give the same commendations to the figure commonly called the *Grinder*, which was dug up at Rome, and transferred sixty years ago to Florence, where it is preserved in his Royal Highness's cabinet. This figure represents the slave, who, as Livy relates a, happened to overhear the scheme, which the sons of Brutus had formed to restore the Tarquins; and thus he saved the infant Republic, by detecting the conspiracy to the conful.

Prodita laxabant portarum claustra tyrannis Exulibus, juvenes ipsius consulis & quos, &c. Occulta ad patres produxit crimina servus, Matronis Lugendus. Juv. sat. 8.

The conful's sons (who &c.)

Opened the gates, endeavouring to restore

Their banish'd king and arbitrary power,

Whilst a poor slave with scarce a name betray'd

The borrid ills, these well-born rogues bad laid;

² Lib. 2. cap. 4.

X 4

Who

Who therefore for their treason justly bore
The rods and ax ne'er us'd in Rome before.

Mr. Stepney.

People who are ever fo little attentive may obferve, upon feeing this statue, that the slave who stoops and puts himself exactly in the posture of a person grinding a knife, that he may appear intirely occupied with his work, is nevertheless absent in mind, and gives his attention not to what he feems to do, but to what he hears. This absence of mind is visible in all his body, but principally in his hands and head. His fingers are well placed, as they ought to be, to weigh down upon the knife, and press it to the stone, but their action seems quite suspended. By a gesture natural to those who listen with an apprehension of being discovered, our slave endeavours to lift up the apple of his eye enough to perceive his object, without raising his head, as it would be natural for him to do, were he under no restraint.

The talent of designing affords great helps towards succeeding in the expression. 'Tis sufficient to behold the Antinous, the Venus of Medicis, and several other monuments of antiquity, to be convinced that the ancients knew, at least as well as we, how to design elegantly and correctly. Their painters had more frequent occasions than ours to study the naked part of pictures; and the exercises which then were in use for suppling and strengthening human bodies, must have rendered dered them better shaped than they are in our times. Rubens in a small latin treatise of his, concerning the use we ought to make of antique statues in painting, does not at all question, but that the exercises practised by the ancients gave such a perfection to human bodies, as in our days

they very feldom attain to.

As time has worn out the colors and confounded the shadowings of the remaining fragments of ancient painting, it is impossible for us to judge how far the painters of antiquity have excelled in coloring; or whether they have equalled or furpassed the great masters of the Lombard school in this amiable branch of the art. Besides, we cannot tell whether the wedding of the Villa Aldobrandina and the other fragments extant were done by a famous colorist, or by an indifferent artist of that time. All that can be faid for certain, with respect to their execution, is, that it is furprizingly bold. These fragments seem to have been done by artifts, who were as complete mafters of their pencils, as Rubens and Paolo Veronese. The strokes of the Aldobrandine wedding, which appear very rough and ordinary when obferved pretty near, look extremely well, when we view this picture twenty steps off. It was probably at this diftance it was viewed on the wall where the painter drew it.

One would be apt to imagine, from the accounts of Pliny and feveral other ancient authors, that the Greeks and Romans excelled in coloring; but before we embrace this notion, we should reflect,

that men generally speak of coloring with respect to what they have feen themselves. A colorift who has surpassed all his predecessors, down to the very time, in which an historian lives who treats of the state of painting in his days, will be mentioned by that historian as the greatest colorist imaginable, as a man whose exquisite abilities have raised even the jealousy of nature. But it frequently falls out afterwards, that this very art is carried by fucceeding performers to a higher degree of perfection. The divine colorist of former times, he that has been fo much extolled by past writers, becomes an ordinary performer in comparison to later artists. Our question cannot therefore be decided by historical relations; to regulate our judgment we must have comparative pieces, which happen to be wanting.

There can be no prejudice formed against the coloring of the ancients, from their having been ignorant of the invention of tempering colors with oil; an invention that was discovered in Flanders about three hundred years ago. A person may color exceeding well tho' he paints only in fresco. The mass of Pope Julius, a performance of Raphael, already commended by us for its coloring, is done in fresco in the Signature apartment in the Vatican.

With respect to the chiaro-scuro, and the bewitching distribution of lights and shades; what Pliny and other writers of antiquity tell us concerning it, is so very positive, and their relations are so very circumstantial and probable, that we cannot cannot refuse the ancients the honor of having equalled, at least in this branch of the art, the greatest of our modern painters. The passages of those authors, whom we did not understand thoroughly, whilst the moderns were yet ignorant of the deluding effects of this magic contrivance, are no longer intricate and obscure, since Rubens and his eleves, as well as Polydore of Caravaggio, and other painters have explained them much better with their pencils, than the most learned commentators could have done with their pens.

The result of this discussion seems to me, that the ancients carried the design, the chiaro-scuro, the expression, and the poetic composition, as far at least as the most able moderns. It seems likewise, that we cannot judge of their coloring; though we are sufficiently convinced by their works (on supposition of our having the best of them) that they have not succeeded so well in the picturesque composition, as Raphael, Rubens, Paolo Veronese, and some other modern

painters.

The reader will please to recollect what occafioned this digression on the ability of the ancients in the art of painting. After having spoken of the advantage which the Latin poets had over the French, I observed that the painters of former ages were not possessed of the same advantage over the moderns; which threw me into a necessity of producing my reasons for not including the Greek and ancient Roman painters in my proposition.

position. To return now from whence I digressed, I say, that those painters who appeared after the restoration of the polite arts; that Raphael, for example, and his cotemporaries, had no manner of advantage over our present artists. The latter are acquainted with all the secrets, and know all the colors, which were made use of by the former.

C H A P. XXXIX.

In what sense it may be said, that nature is grown rich since the time of Raphael.

N the contrary our present painters draw more fuccors from the art, than Raphael and his cotemporaries could possibly have done. Since that painter's time, nature and art have perfeeted themselves, and were he to come back into the world with the fame abilities, he would be able to perform still more than what he did at the time in which providence placed him: whereas Virgil would find it impossible to write so good an epic poem in French, as he has done in Latin. The Lombard school has carried the art of coloring to a degree of perfection, which it had not attained during the life of Raphael. The school of Antwerp has likewise made, since that painter's time, feveral discoveries relating to the magic of the chiaro-scuro. Michael Angelo of Cara-.noidles

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Caravaggio, and his followers, have also made fome excellent discoveries in this same branch of painting, tho' we have room to reproach them with being too fond of it. In short, nature has been imbellished since the time of Raphael. Let

us explain this paradox.

Our painters are acquainted at present with a more beautiful and perfecter nature of trees and animals, than was known to the predecessors of Raphael, or even to Raphael himself. I shall be fatisfied with producing three examples; the trees of the Low Countries, the animals of England and fome other countries, and finally the fruits, flowers, and trees of the East and West Indies.

Raphael and his cotemporaries lived at a time when the East Indies and America were yet undifcovered to painters. People of a particular profession cannot be said to have discovered a country, or to be able to avail themselves of such of its rich productions as may be of fervice to them, till some of their profession have travelled through Brasil, for example, was known to merchants long before it was discovered to physicians. It was not till after Piso and some other able physicians had been in Brasil, that the gentlemen of the faculty in Europe came to know its trees and fimples. In like manner the east of Asia and America had been already discovered to grocers and lapidaries in the time of Raphael; but it was not till after his death that those parts of the world were known to painters, by importing from thence defigns

designs of the plants, fruits, and strange animals of those countries, which may contribute

very much to imbellish a picture.

'Tis owing to the temperate climate of the Low Countries, and the nature of the foil, that the trees in that country grow nearer one another, are taller, straighter, and better stocked with leaves, than those of the same kind in Greece, Italy, and even in several provinces of France. The leaves of the trees of the Netherlands are not only more numerous, but also greener and larger. Hence their hillocks furnish a more verdant, and of course a fresher and pleasanter idea of a landskip, than those of Italy.

The cows, bulls, sheep, and even the swine, have a much better conformation in England than in Italy and Greece. 'Tis true the Venetian merchants frequented the sea-port towns of England before Raphael's time; the English pilgrims likewise slocked to Rome in great numbers for the sake of indulgences; but none of them were painters, and what they might have related concerning the animals of that country, was far from being a regular draught or design.

It must be acknowledged indeed, that Raphael and his cotemporaries studied nature in the works of the ancients, as well as in nature's own productions. But the ancients themselves were unacquainted with the trees and animals now mentioned. The idea of the beauty of nature, which they had formed from particular trees and animals, by taking for their models those

of Greece and Italy; this Idea, I say, falls very short of what nature produces of this kind in other countries. Hence the fine antique horses, even that on which Marcus Aurelius is mounted, which Peter of Cortona seized with a picturesque enthusiasm, used to address with this speech as often as he passed by the capitol: Come forward, dost thou not know thou art alive? have not such elegant proportions, or so noble a make and air, as those which have been made by sculptors who have had a knowledge of the horses of the north of England, and since the species of those animals has been improved in different countries by the mixture which industrious nations know how to make of their breeds.

The horses of Montecavallo, by reason of the vicious proportion of feveral parts of their bodies, and especially because of their enormous chefts, appear like wretched things to those who are acquainted with the English and Andalusian horses. The inscription which affures us that one of these horses is the workmanship of Phidias, and the other of Praxiteles, is, I allow, an im-Nevertheless they must have been in great esteem among the ancients, since Constantine had them removed from Alexandria to Rome. as a precious monument with which he intended to adorn his hot baths. Myron's cow, that famous cow which the herdsmen mistook for one of their own flock, when they drove their cattle to graze around it, was much inferior, in all probability, to fome thousands in the northern

thern counties of England; fince it had fo great a resemblance with its models. This at least is certain, that the bulls, cows, and swine, which we behold in antique Low-relieves, are nothing to compare to the animals of the same kind we see in England. One observes a beauty in the latter, which the imagination of artists, who had not seen them, could never attain to.

It would be necessary to know the world almost as well as that intelligent being who created it, and laid it out in its present arrangement, to be able to imagine the perfection which nature is capable of attaining to, by the help of a combination of chances favorable to its productions, and of circumstances proper for their nurture and improvement. The knowledge of man, with regard to the conformation of the universe, being so vastly limited, he cannot, by lending nature imaginary beauties, improve her with his inventions, as much as the can perfect herfelf by the affiftance of particular conjunctures: Nay, it frequently happens, that our imagination spoils, instead of improving, Wherefore, as long as the beauties of nature. men proceed in the discovery of unknown countries, and the curious observators continue to import new treasures from thence; nature, considered with respect to painters and sculptors, will always continue to receive new improvements.

CHAP. XL.

Whether the effect which painting produces on men, be greater than that of poetry.

AM of opinion, that the effect which painting produces on men, surpasses that of poetry; and am induced to think thus for two reasons. The first is, that painting operates on us by means of the sense of seeing. The second, that it does not employ artificial signs, as poetry, but natural ones; by which it makes its imitations.

Painting makes use of the eye to move us. Now as Horace says,

Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem, Quàm quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.

Hor. de arte.

Things only told, the of the same degree,

Do raise our passions less than what we see;

For the spectator takes in every part,

The eye's the faithfullest servant to the heart.

CREECH.

The fight has a much greater empire over the foul than any of the other fenses. 'Tis a sense in which the soul, thro' an instinct strengthened by experience, places the greatest considence. She Vol. I.

Y

appeals

appeals to the fense of seeing, from the reports made by the other senses, when she suspects these reports of insidelity: Wherefore there is no noise, nor even any natural sound that affects us as much as visible objects. For example, the cries of a wounded man whom we do not see, do not move us, tho' acquainted with the cause thereof, as much as we should be touched at the sight of his bleeding wounds. We may say here, metaphorically speaking, that the eye is nearer to the soul than the ear.

In the next place, the figns with which painters address us, are not arbitrary or instituted, fuch as words employed in poetry. Painting makes use of natural figns, the energy of which does not depend on education. They draw their force from the relation which nature herself has fixed between our organs and the external objects, in order to attend to our prefervation. Perhaps I do not express myself properly, in saying, that the painter makes use of figns; 'tis nature herself which he exhibits to our fight. Tho' our mind be not imposed upon, our senses at least are deluded. The figure of the objects, their color, the reflection of light, the shades, in short, every thing that can be the object of fight, present themselves in a picture, just as we see them in nature. Even fometimes the eye is fo dazzled by the performance of a great painter, as to fancy a movement in his figures.

The most tender verses can affect us only by degrees, and by setting the several springs of

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our machine successively to work. Words must first excite those ideas, whereof they are only arbitrary signs. These ideas must be ranged afterwards in the imagination, and form such pictures as move and engage us. All these operations, it is true, are soon done; but it is an uncontestable principle in mechanics, that the multiplicity of springs always debilitates the movement, by reason that one spring never communicates to another all the motion it has received. Besides, one of these operations (that which is performed when the word excites the idea it signifies) is not done by virtue of the laws of nature; but is partly artisficial.

Those objects therefore, which are exhibited to us by pictures acting as natural figns, must certainly operate with greater expedition. The impression they make on us must be stronger and quicker, than that which can arise from verses. When we read in Horace a the description of love whetting his fiery darts on a stone imbrued with blood; the words, which the poet adopts in the drawing of his picture, excite within us the ideas of these objects; and these ideas form afterwards a picture in our imagination, reprefenting love in this attitude and employment. This image indeed moves us; but when it is exhibited in painting, it becomes much more affecting. We behold then at one immediate view, things which. in verse are represented successively only to our

a Lib. 2. od. 8.

imagination. Thus the image contained in thefe verses,

Semper ardentes acuens sagittas

Cote cruenta.

And Cupid, sharp'ning flaming darts
On bloody whetstones, gently smiles.

CREECH.

feems in some measure a new representation, and strikes a fresher and stronger impression on those that behold it in a picture at Chantilly. Here the painter has made use of this image for the ground-work of a piece, the principal figure of which is the portraiture of a princes issued from the blood Royal of France, a princes more celebrated in our days for her beauty, the same whereof will descend to posterity, than illustrious for her dignity and birth. This picture exhibits several little Cupids, who are turning a grind-stone. A Cupid who has pricked his arm, lets his blood spout upon the stone, while another whets his darts, and with the steel thereof strikes out sparks of sire.

In fine, there is no body hardly but what has had feveral occasions during his life-time, of obferving, how much easier it is to make men apprehend, what we are desirous of conveying to their imagination or understanding, by means of the eye, than by the help of the ear. A design

which

which exhibits the elevation of a palace, makes us inftantly comprehend the nature of the building; and the plan thereof gives us immediately an idea of the distribution of the apartments. But a methodical discourse of an hour's length, let us be ever fo attentive, would never make us understand so well what we see here at one glance. The very clearest phrases supply but poorly the want of defigns, and it very rarely happens, that the idea of a building, formed by our imagination, even from the description of people of the profession, is exactly conformable to the edifice. It falls out frequently, that when we afterwards behold the building, we find our imagination had a chimerical notion of it. The fame thing happens with regard to the adjacent parts of a fortrefs, the incampment of an army, a field of battle, a new plant, a strange animal, a machine; and, in fhort, to all those objects on which our curiofity can be amused. We must have cuts, to understand furely and distinctly the most methodical books written on these subjects. For the most regular imagination frequently forms chimeras, upon attempting to draw a picture from these descriptions; especially when the person who draws by imagination has never feen thefe or fimilar objects himself. I can conceive very well, for example, that a military person can form an image of a particular attack or incampment from a description; but one who never saw either incampments or attacks cannot acquire a just idea of these things from bare relations. 'Tis Y 3 only

only in reference to such objects as we have seen, that we are capable of forming an exact image of

things described.

Vitruvius, in his book of Architecture, has added a vast deal of method and art (which he was a complete maîter of) to as much perspicuity as his fubject could possibly admit. Nevertheless, as the figures with which he accompanied his explications have perished through the injury of time, the greatest part of these explications seem to be wrapt up in great obscurity. The learned therefore dispute the meaning of several passages; but they all agree that his text would be clear, had we not loft his figures. Four lines drawn out on a piece of paper would clear up, what whole volumes of commentaries can never re-The most able anatomists agree also in concile. this, that it would be difficult for them to understand justly a description of a new discovery, if there were no cuts given with this description. One of the most common Italian proverbs fays, that every thing can be easily understood by the help of defign and figure. The ancients pretended, that their Gods were better ferved by their painters and sculptors, than by their poets. They imagined that pictures and statues recommended the Gods to the veneration of the people, by rendering them attentive to the marvels, which the poets related of their Deities. The statue of Jupiter Olympius inclined the vulgar to believe the fable, which made Iove ruler and distributer of the thunder.

Si

Si Venerem Cous nunquam pinxisset Apelles, Mersa sub æquoreis illa lateret aquis. Ovid de Art. 1.3.

Had not Apelles drawn the sea-born queen,
Her beauties still beneath the waves had been.

Congresse.

of Julius Cæsar was laid on the suneral pile, it was natural for every one to inquire into the circumstances of the assassinate. It can hardly be supposed that any of the inhabitants of Rome were ignorant of the number of stabs, which pierced the dictator's body: And yet the people only wept at the relation of his murder. But the whole multitude were seized with terror, when they saw displayed before their eyes the robe impurpled with blood, in which Cæsar was massacred. It looked then, says Quintilian, speaking of the power the eye hath over the soul, as if the murderers were actually assassinating Cæsar in the presence of the people a.

In the times of the old Romans, those who had been cast away, went about to beg charity, carrying a picture with them, in which their missortune was represented, as an object more capable

² Sciebatur interfectum eum. Vestis tamen illa sanguine madens ita repræsentavit imaginem sceleris, ut non occisus esse Cæsar, sed tum maxime occidi videretur. QUINT. Inst. 1. 6. c. 2.

of moving compassion, and of exciting people's charity, than the most pathetic recitals of their disasters. We can appeal therefore to the know-ledge and experience of those, whose subsistence depends on the pious liberality of their fellow-citizens, concerning the most proper and effectual methods of softening the heart of man.

There may be one objection made against my sentiment, to prove that verses have a greater force of moving than pictures. The objection is, that it is very rare to see a picture draw tears, which is a common effect even of those tragedies, that have no superior excellence in their kind.

I have two answers to make to this objection. The first is, that it concludes nothing absolutely in favor of poetry. A tragedy represented on the stage, produces its effect by means of the eye; and is supported by foreign succours, whose power we shall presently explain. Tragedies that are read in private, very seldom make us weep; especially when we read them without having seen them previously asked. For, as I apprehend, a private reading, which is incapable of itself of making such an impression as to draw tears, may be able nevertheless to renew this impression.

Hence, methinks, it arises, that those who have only privately perused a tragedy, and those who have seen it acted on the stage, are sometimes of different opinions with regard to the merit of the piece.

My fecond answer is, that a tragedy includes an infinite number of pictures. A painter who draws draws the facrifice of Iphigenia, represents only one instant of the action. But Racine's tragedy exhibits to our fight feveral instants of this action; and the different incidents contribute to render one another reciprocally more pa-The poet prefents us fuccessively with fifty pictures, as it were, which lead us gradually to that excessive emotion, which commands our tears. Forty scenes therefore of a tragedy ought naturally to move us more, than one fingle fcene drawn in a picture. A picture does not even represent more than one instant of a scene. Wherefore an intire poem affects us more than a picture; tho' the latter would move us more than a fingle fcene representing the same event, were it to be detached from the reft, and read without having feen any of the preceding scenes.

A picture therefore makes but one attack upon the foul, whereas a poem affails it for a long time, and always with new arms. A poem uses many repeated efforts before it throws us into that emotion which commands our tears. Racine. to make us tremble with horror, when Iphigenia is conducted to the fatal altar, represents her virtuous, amiable, and cherished by her lover, whom she likewise loves. Thus he makes us pass through several degrees of emotion; and, to give us a greater fensibility of the misfortunes of the victim, he lets us even flatter our imagination for some time, that she has escaped the facrificer's

knife.

A painter who represents the instant, in which the priest is going to plunge the hallowed steel into Iphigenia's bosom, has not the advantage of exposing his picture before spectators so tenderly disposed, and so lately warmed with friendship for this princess. The most he can do is to interest us in her favor, but he cannot render her so amiable as the poet. The greatness of soul, and all the elevated sentiments of a good natural disposition, which the poet lends Iphigenia, are more capable of conciliating our affections, than the external qualities with which a painter imbellishes the mute personage of his picture. Hence we are more moved by a poem than a picture, tho' painting hath a greater empire over us than poetry.

The kind of parallel I have now drawn, is not fo full of erudition, as the comparison of painting and poetry in the learned book of Junius the son, on the painting of the ancients; but my reflections, I fancy, are more to the purpose than the erudition of this author a.

The industry of man has found out various means of rendering pictures still more capable of making impression upon us. In the first place they contrive to varnish them. Secondly they inclose them in gilt frames, which throw a new lustre upon their colors, and seem, by separating the picture from neighbouring objects, to unite better the several parts whereof they are composed; in the same manner almost, as a window seems to

² Junius de pict. vet. 1. 4. c. 1.

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collect the different objects that are feen thro' it. Finally, fome of the more modern painters have found out a contrivance of placing in compositions intended for a diftant view, some parts of figures in relievo which belong to the ordonnance, and are colored like the other painted figures. They pretend that the eye, which fees those parts in relievo distinctly prominent in the picture, is more eafily imposed upon by the painted parts, which are really flat, and that the latter are rendered thus more capable of deluding the eyes. those who have feen the arched roof of the Annunciata at Genoa, or that of the Gefú at Rome, where figures in relievo are taken into the ordonnance, do not find this hath any fuch marvellous effect.

Human industry has been of much greater service to verses than pictures. By industry there have been three methods discovered of giving them a new force to please and move us. These are simple recitation; the recitation accompanied with the movements of the body, which is called declamation; and singing.



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C'HAP. XLI.

Of simple recitation and declamation.

their verses received a force from recitation, which they have not when a person reads them privately to himself. This induced them of course to recite their poems, rather than give them to be read. The harmony of the verses which a person recites, flatters the ear, and increases the pleasure which the subject is capable of imparting. On the contrary, the action of reading is in some measure a pain. 'Tis an operation which the eye learns to make by the assistance of art, and is not attended with any agreable sensation, such as that which rises from the application of the eye to the objects exhibited by pictures.

As words are arbitrary figns of our ideas, fo the different characters of which writing is composed, are arbitrary figns of the sounds whereof the words are composed. 'Tis therefore necessary, when we read verse, that the characters should immediately excite the idea of those sounds, of which they are arbitrary signs; and 'tis necessary likewise, that the sounds of words, which are also no more than arbitrary signs, should excite the ideas affixed to these words. With whatever expedition and facility these operations are performed, they cannot be gone through so readily

mediately the idea connected with it.

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I am not ignorant, that a fine edition of a book, the characters of which are extremely regular and black, and are ranged in an elegant proportion on a clear white paper, affords a very pleafing fenfation to the eye; but this pleasure, be it great or small, in proportion to the tafte a person has for the art of printing, is a diffinct thing, that has nothing in common with the emotion caused by reading a poem. Even this pleasure ceases, as foon as a person applies his attention to the reading; and then he is no longer fensible of the beauty of the impression, but by the ease it gives the eye in diflinguishing the characters and affembling the words. To confider an Elzevir Virgil as a beauful impression, and to read Virgil's verses in order to be affected with their charms, are two distinct actions. Our dispute regards the latter, which of itself is no fort of pleasure.

'Tis fo far from being a pleasure, and so little it makes us feel of the harmony of the verse, that we are taught by instinct to pronounce aloud those verses which we read only for ourselves, when we think they should be numerous and harmonious. This is a judgment which the mind forms by an unpremeditated operation; an operation which we understand only by ressection. Such are most of the operations of the mind hitherto spoken of; as also, the

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greatest part of those which we shall hereafter have occasion to mention.

The recitation therefore of verse is a pleasure to the ear; whereas reading is a labor to the eve. By hearing verses recited, we save ourselves the trouble of reading, while we perceive their cadence and harmony. The auditor is more indulgent than the reader, by reason of his being more flattered with the verses he hears, than the other is with those he reads. Is it not acknowledging, that the recitation imposes on our judgment, to defer giving our opinion on the merit of a poem which pleased us in the recitation, till we have examined it diligently by a private perusal? We must not (people say) be too forward in pasfing our judgment; for the recitation is frequently very imposing. The experience therefore of our own fenfes teaches us, that the eye is a much feverer critic, a much fubtler examiner of a poem than the ear; by reason that it is not exposed on this occasion, like the ear, to be seduced by The more a work pleases, the less we are capable of detecting and computing its faults. Now a work which a person hears recited, is much more agreable than that which he privately peruses in his closet.

Thus we see that all poets, either thro' instinct, or from a conviction of their interest, chuse rather to recite their verses than to give them to be read, even to those whom they intrust with every secret relating to their productions. They are in the right of it, if they seek for praise rather than useful counsels.

It was by the way of recitation that the ancient poets published such of their works as were not composed for the theatre. We find by Juvenal's fatyres a, that there were numerous affemblies established at Rome, for hearing the recital of those poems with which authors intended to favor the public. We even meet in the customs of those times, with a much stronger proof of the pleasure arising from the simple recitation of harmonious verses. The Romans, who frequently mixed other amusements with the pleasure of their repafts, used fometimes to have Homer, Virgil, and other excellent poets, read to them at table, tho' the greatest part of the guests must have been supposed to know by heart a part of the verses recited on those occasions. they reckoned, that the pleasure of numbers, and harmony was able to fupply the want of novelty.

Juvenal promises a friend whom he invites to come and sup with him, that he shall hear Homer and Virgil's verses recited during the time of repast, as in our times we should promise to entertain our guests with a game of cards after supper. "Tho' my reader (says he) be not one of the cleverest at his business, yet as the verses he is to read us are extremely beautiful, they will certainly afford us some pleasure."

Nostra dabunt alios bodie convivia ludos, Conditor Iliados cantabitur atque Maronis,

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a Satyr prim. & sept.

Altisoni, dubiam facientia carmina palmam:
Quid refert tales versus qua voce legantur?

Juv. sat. 11.

But my poor entertainment is design'd,
T'afford you pleasures of another kind;
Yet with your taste your hearing shall be fed,
And Homer's sacred lines and Virgil's read:
Either of whom does all mankind excel,
Tho' which exceeds the other none can tell.
It matters not with what ill tone they're sung,
Verse so sublimely good no voice can wrong.

CONGREVE.

a poem, 'tis eafy to conceive what advantage pieces declaimed on the stage, must draw from the representation. If those who think Terence's comedies frigid, had seen them acted by the ancient comedians, who had at least as much vivacity as the Italian players of our times, they would soon be of another opinion. Who is it that would put Surene's Vintage a in his library, (an observation which Quintilian b makes of some pieces of his time) were this comedy to be co-

a Les vendanges de Surêne.

b Scenici actores optimis poetarum tantum adjiciunt gratia, ut nos infinite magis eadem illa audita quam lecta delectent, & vilissimis etiam quibusdam impetrant aures, ut quibus nullus est in bibliothecis locus, sit etiam in theatris. Quint, Inst. orat. 1.11. C. 3.

pied, as it must have been in his days, when the art of printing was not yet invented? Nevertheless the representation of this farce affords us some diversion.

The apparatus of the stage prepares us for being moved, and the theatrical action gives a surprising force to verse. As the eloquence of the body is no less persuasive than that of words, gestures are of great affishance to the voice in making an impression. This we learn even by instinct, which informs us, that those who hear us speak, without seeing us, are but half hearers. In fact, as Cicero observes and aparticular air of countenance and gesture to each passion and sentiment.

The chief merit of a declaimer, is to move himself. The internal emotion of the speaker throws a pathos into his tone and gesture, which neither art nor study are able to produce. We are prejudiced in favor of actors who seem to be moved; and displeased with those who shew no symptoms of passion. Now a kind of coldness in exclamations, a forced gesture, and an affected countenance, discover always the indolent actor, and shew him to be a person who is moved only by art, and who would fain make us weep, without feeling any affliction himself; a most disagreable character, which borders in some measure upon that of an impostor.

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^{*} Omnis enim motus animi suum quendam a natura habet vultum, & sonum, & gestum. Cic. 1. 3. de orat.

Si vis me flere, dolendum est Primum ipsi tibi. Hor. de arte poet.

My grief with others just proportion bears, To make me weep, you must be first in tears.

CREECH.

Whoever practifes any of those arts, whose aim is to move mankind, must expect to be judged according to this maxim of Horace: that to make others weep, we should grieve first ourselves. A passion is but poorly imitated, which appears only from the teeth outward. To express it well, it should have made at least some slight impression upon the heart a.

I apprehend therefore, that the genius requisite to form an excellent declaimer, consists in a sensibility of heart, which makes him enter mechanically, but with affection, into the sentiments of the personage he acts. It consists in a mechanic disposition to be actuated easily by all those passions, which he has occasion to represent. Quintilian b, who was of opinion, that his profession of teaching eloquence laid him under an obligation of studying the motions of the human heart, at least as much as the rules of grammar, says, that the orator who moves most, is he that is most

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² Nec agamus rem quosi alienam, sed assuamus parumper illum dolorem. Quint. l. 6. c. 1.

Imagines rerum quisquis benè conceperit, is erit in affectibus potentissimus. 1.6. c. 1.

moved. He says again, speaking De affectibus qui effinguntur imitatione, or of the imitation of the paffions which the orator uses in his declamation, that it is effentially necessary for a declaimer to heat his imagination, by making a lively representation to himself of such objects as he intends to employ in order to move others, and to be as much affected with the images he conceives as with the objects themselves a.

Those orators and comedians, who have been most eminent in their professions, were persons born with the fenfibility here mentioned. a qualification which is not in the power of art to give. Without it, the filver found of voice, and all the other talents of nature will never be able to form a good declaimer. We may always make the fame observation on good actors, as Quintilian b made on the players of his time; which is, that they appeared with tears in their eyes coming off the stage, when they had been acting some very ingaging part.

As women have a quicker and more docile fenfibility, and a greater flexibility, as it were, in their hearts than men; they succeed better than our fex in performing what Quintilian requires of those who attempt to declaim. They

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a Primum est bene affici, & concipere imagines rerum, & tanquam veris moveri. Quint. 1. 11. c. 3.

b Vidi ego sæpe histriones atque Comædos, cum ex aliquo graviore acti personam deposuissent, flentes adbuc egredi. Id. 1. 11. C. 3: 01 smost naml w bas framma and a some winds global and the Z 2

are much easier affected with such passions as they chuse to imitate; and enter with a better grace into the sentiments of the personage they intend to act. Wherefore, tho' men are more capable than women of a strong and close application; tho' the education they receive renders them sitter for learning whatsoever the art can teach; there have been nevertheless a greater number of excellent actresses than actors on the French stage, within these threescore years. Since the opera has been established in France, we have not seen one man excel so well in the art of the proper declamation for accompanying the recitative as Mademoiselle Rochoix.

CHAP. XLII.

Of the French manner of reciting tragedy and comedy.

A S the end of tragedy is to excite terror and compassion, and as the marvellous is an effential part of this poem; we should invest the personages, with all the dignity possible. Hence these personages are commonly apparelled at present in dresses of our own invention; the first idea of which was borrowed of the military habit of the ancient Romans; a habit noble of its nature, and which seems to have been suited to the glory of the people that wore it. The

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dresses of our actresses are the richest and most majestic that fancy can invent. On the contrary, we employ the town-dresses, that is, such as are used in common life, in the representation of comedies.

The French do not depend upon dress alone, for giving the actors of tragedy a fuitable dignity and grandeur. We infift likewise, upon their fpeaking with a tone of voice more elevated, graver, and more fustained than that which is used in common conversation. All the little negligences which custom authorizes in the pronunciation of familiar discourse, are forbidden in our tragedies. 'Tis true this manner of reciting is more troublesome than a pronunciation bordering upon ordinary conversation; but, besides being more majestic, it is also more advantageous for the spectators, who are better enabled thereby to understand the verses. The spectators, who are most of them at some distance from the stage, would find it too difficult to understand properly the figurative style of tragic verses, were they recited lower and quicker; especially if they were to fee a piece acted for the first time. A great part would escape them; and that which they had loft would frequently obstruct their being moved with what they understood. 'Tis requisite also, that the geftures of tragic actors be exacter and nobler, their step and gate more grave, and their countenance more ferious than those of comic personages. In fine, we infift upon tragic actors giving an air of Z 3 * grandeur

grandeur and dignity to whatfoever they do; as we require of poets who find them words, to give the like grandeur and dignity to whatever

they make them fay.

Wherefore we find, that according to the general opinion of the people of Europe, the French fucceed best at present in the representation of tragedies. When envy, fays Quintilian 2, is extinguished, civility and good nature take place. The Italians, who are willing to do us justice, with regard to those arts and talents in which they do not claim not the honor of excelling themselves, allow that our tragic declamation gives them an idea of the theatrical finging or declamation of the ancients, which is loft. In fact, to judge of the theatrical declamation of the Romans as well as of the Greeks, (the Roman stage having been formed from the Greek) by what Quintilian fays of it, the recitation of the ancients must have been fomething bordering upon our tragic declamation.

But concerning this subject, we shall speak more at large in our treatife of the music of the ancients, which the reader will find at the end of time. A great part would c

this work.

'Tis fufficiently agreed upon, as we have obferved, throughout Europe, that the French, who for this century past have composed the best dramatic pieces among the moderns, recite tragedies also the best, and represent them with the great-

² Quoties discessit amulatio, succedit humanitas. QUINT. 1. 11. cap. 1.

est decency. In Italy the actors recite their tragedies with the fame tone and gesture as comedy; fo that the cothurnus does not differ there from the foccus. If the Italian actors attempt to grow warm in pathetic passages, they strait overdo their part, and the hero becomes a bragadocio. I shall only mention one word concerning their tragedies made for declamation. They are as much inferior to Corneille's and Racine's pieces, as the least indifferent of our epic poems fall short of Ariosto's Rolando furioso, or Taffo's Gerusalemme liberata. Either thro' a despair of success, or from some other motives which I cannot divine, they feem to have long neglected their dramatic poetry. Machiavel's Mandragora, one of the best comedies that has been wrote fince Terence's time, and which we should scarce imagine to be a production of that brain, from whence fuch profound reflections have iffued on war, and politics, but principally on conspiracies; is an only piece of its kind The Clitia by the fame author in the Italian. is a much inferior performance. I do not think, that in the whole course of the seventeenth century, the Italian presses have furnished us with above thirty tragedies made for declamation. tho' they have published during that space of time a great many works of wit and humor. At least, I have not met with a greater number in the catalogues of this kind of writing, which the Italians eminent in the Republic of letters have given us within these twenty years, on occasion of Z4 the 344 CRITICAL REFLECTIONS on the disputes they have lately sustained for the honor of their nation.

The Italian dramatic poets compose nothing now but operas, in comparison to which all Europe allows, that our French operas are master-pieces of wit, good sense, and regularity. Abbot Gravina published about thirty years ago at Naples, sive tragedies composed for declamation. Their names are Palamedes, Andromeda, Appius Claudius, Papinian, and Servius Tullius. He complains elegantly in a preface in verse, prefixed to these tragedies, that Melpomene, for whom the stage was first invented, appears now in Italy, only as a hand-maid to Polyhymnia; in short, that she is become a mean slave to painting, music, and sculpture.

E in vece d'adoprar le forze proprie,
Debba le forze adoprar de gl'artefici,
Di Cantori, Pittori, e Statuarii,
Di quali è divenuta ancilla ignobile
Colei che sopra loro ba'l sommo imperio,
E sopra le scene ha minor parte ed infima
Quella per cui le scene s'inventarono.

In another part of Europe the pathetic of tragic declamation confifted, about forty years ago, in a furious tone of voice, a fullen or wild carriage, and frantic gestures. The actors on the tragic stage now mentioned, were dispensed with all grandeur in their gesture, with measure in their pronunciation, dignity in their carriage, and decency in their gate. It was fufficient for them to make a show of a black and dismal surliness, or to seem abandoned to the transports of a fury which led them into idle and extravagant speeches. On this stage, Julius Cæsar was allowed to pull himself by the hair to express his choler, like one of the dregs of the people. Alexander, to fignify his passion, might stamp with his foot; a fign which even our school-boys are not allowed in acting tragedies at our colleges.

In another country, the heroes debase themfelves intirely by the low indecencies they act on the stage. In one of these scenes you may see Scipio fmoaking a pipe of tobacco, and drinking a pot of beer in his tent, while he is meditating the plan of the battle he is upon the point of

giving the Carthaginians. and and and lottinging

I shall say nothing here concerning the Flemish flage, by reason that in the tragic part, they scarce do any thing more than copy the French scenes of those times, when plays were acted on our Saviour's passion. They have but a very small number of original tragedies, and their declamation is only fomewhat less musical, and less animated than he favs, in order that of the French actors.

Our tragic fcenes are not only noble, but are also purged of all frivolous pageantry; they are free from those childish shows, which help only to degrade Melpomene of her dignity. Let us hear what one of the greatest tragic poets

of England says, with regard to the decency of our representations. I should therefore, in this particular, recommend to my countrymen the example of the French stage, where the kings and queens always appear unattended, and leave their guards behind the scenes. I should likewise be glad if we imitated the French in banishing from our stage the noise of drums, trumpets, and huzza's; which is sometimes so very great, that when there is a battle in the Hay-market theatre, one may hear it as far as Charing-cross.

Mr. Addison, whom I have here quoted, mentions many other things in this effay, and in that published eight days after, against several other common practices of the English stage, which he very justly centures as vicious. Such is the cuftom of exposing the apparatus of the most frightful punishments, and sometimes the very punishments themselves. Such is the practice of introducing hideous spectres; and dreadful apparitions upon the stage. True it is he thinks the French poets are too affected in excluding all these forts of spectacles. For instance, he finds fault with the great Corneille for not having caused Camilla to be flain upon the stage . Corneille, he fays, in order to avoid imbruing the stage with blood, renders the action of young Horatius fill more atrocious, by giving him leifure to make fome reflection, and this without thinking

[·] Spectator 18. April 1711. No. 42.

The Horatius's act 4. 200

that he must at the end of the piece save the murderer of his fifter. Horatius would be less odious, were he to kill Camilla at the very time she utters her imprecations against Rome. Be this observation just or not, it cannot be denied, that if the representation of tragedies is too much loaded with spectacles in England, it is certainly too naked in France. Let us but ask the actress, who plays the part of Andromache, whether the scene a in which Andromache, ready to put an end to her life, recommends her fon to her confidante, would not become more moving by introducing the unfortunate infant upon the stage, whose presence would naturally furnish an opportunity of shewing the most pathetic symptoms of maternal tenderness; which could never appear frigid in fuch a fituation?

The same cannot be said of comedy as of tragedy. Among the different ways in which comedy is now recited in different countries, I do not think that one can be said to excel the other. Each country, methinks, ought to have its peculiar

manner of reciting.

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In comic representations 'tis not proposed to conciliate respect to the personages introduced on the stage, but to render them known to the spectators. Comedians therefore must copy the singularities of their nation in gesture, carriage, and pronunciation; and must mould themselves, as it were, after the model of their countrymen. The

a In one of Racine's Tragedies.

people of some countries have, generally speaking, a greater variation in their tone of voice, employ acuter and more frequent accents in their pronunciation, and are more active in their gefture. than others. As the natural disposition of some nations is more lively than that of others, their action of course must be brisker, and their sentiments and passions slip from them with an impetuofity not usual to other nations. The French do not use certain gesticulations, nor antic demonstrations with their fingers, neither do they laugh, as the Italians. We do not vary our pronunciation with particular accents, which are common in Italy, even in familiar conversations. Now a comic actor, were he to imitate a foreign gesticulation and pronunciation in declaiming, would act contrary to the rule abovementioned. For example, were an English comedian to flew fo much vivacity in his gefture, fuch difquiet in his vifage, fuch eagerness in his countenance, or to break into frequent exclamations in his pronunciation, in fhort, were he to act intirely like an Italian comedian, he would act his part very ill; because the English, who ought to be his model, have not that behaviour and gesture. That which is sufficient to move an Italian, makes no impression upon an Englishman. An Englishman, against whom sentence of death is pronounced, appears with less agitation than an Italian condemned to a small pecuniary fine.

The best comic actor therefore is he, who succeeds best in the theatrical imitation of his origi-

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nals, whatever these originals be. If the comedians of one country are more agreable than those of another to foreigners, 'tis because the former have copied their characters from a people that have naturally a greater politeness in their manners, and a more attracting grace in their elocution.

C H A P. XLIII.

That the pleasure we receive at the theatre, is not the effect of illusion.

IS the opinion of feveral men of fenfe, that the pleasure we receive from spectacles and pictures is merely the effect of illusion. Pursuant to their way of thinking, the representation of the Cid affords us so much pleasure merely thro' the illusion that deceives us. verses of the great Corneille, the apparatus of the scenes, and the declamation of the actors, impose upon us so as to make us believe, that inflead of affifting at the representation of the event, we are present at the event itself, and that we really fee the action, and not the imitation. But this opinion feems to me to be quite unwarrantable. There can be no illusion in the mind of a man who is in his fenses, unless these have been first imposed upon. Now tho' it be true, that whatever we see on the stage contributes to move

us, yet nothing is done by way of deluding our fenses, because every thing shews itself there in the nature of a copy. We do not go to the theatre with a notion that we shall see Chimene and Roderigue; neither do we carry along with us fuch a prevention, as that with which a person, who has been over perfuaded by a conjurer that he will let him fee an apparition, enters into the cave where the ghost is to appear. This prevention disposes him prodigiously for the illusion; but we carry no fuch prejudice with us to the theatre. The play bill has promifed us only an imitation or copy of Chimene and of Phædra. We come to the playhouse prepared to behold what we really fee there, and we have a thousand things continually before our eyes, which remind us constantly of our real circumstances with respect to place and condition. The spectator preserves therefore his understanding, notwithstanding the liveliest emotion. He receives the impression of the passions, but without raving or falling into extravagancies. The most that can happen is, that a young person of a very tender disposition, may be fo transported with a pleasure which is yet novel to him, that his emotion and furprize will make him fall into fome exclamation or involuntary geflures; which indicate, that he does not actually reflect on the external behaviour he should obferve in a public affembly. But he will quickly return to himself, and become sensible of his momentary absence of mind: For 'tis not true, that he fancied during his extafy, he faw Roderigue and and Chimene. He only was touched in almost as lively a manner as he would have been, had he really feen Roderigue at the feet of his miftress after he had killed her father. The fame may be faid with respect to painting. The picture of Attila, drawn by Raphael, does not derive its merit from feducing and imposing upon us, so as to make us believe, that we really fee St Peter and St Paul in the air, menacing with their drawn fwords this barbarous King environed with troops, which were marching under his command to plunder and ransack the city of Rome. But in the picture here mentioned, Attila is so exact a figure of a frightened Scythian; Pope Leo, who explains this vision to him, shews so noble a confidence, and a carriage fo conformable to his dignity; all the standers by are so extremely like unto men in the fame circumstances, as those in which Raphael supposes his different personages; the very horses themselves concur so well to the principal action; and the imitation all together is fo extremely probable, that it makes almost as great an impression on the spectators, as the event itself could possibly have produced.

There have been several stories a published of animals, children, and even of adult people, who have been imposed upon by pictures, so as to take them for the objects, of which they were only an imitation. These (some will say) were all insured by the illusion, which has been considered

^{*} PLIN. 1. 3. c. 10.

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here as impossible. Likewise several birds have dashed their heads against the perspective of Ruel, deceived by his sky, which was so persectly imitated, that they fancied they might sly across it. There have been also instances of persons, who have addressed their speech to portraits, imagining they were speaking to real men. Every one knows the story of the picture of Rembrandt's servant maid. He exposed it at the window from whence this girl used frequently to look out; by which means he made the neighbours come all in their turns to converse with the portrait.

I shall not dispute any of these facts; all that can be inferred from hence amounts to no more, than that pictures may fometimes be the cause of illusion; but it does not follow, that an illufion is the fource of the pleasure derived to us from poetic and picturesque imitations. A convincing argument hereof, is, that the pleafure continues when the danger of being furprized is over. The pictures please us without the affiftance of this illusion, which is only an incident, and a very rare one too, of the pleasure they afford us. The pictures please us, tho' we actually recollect that they are no more than a piece of canvals, on which a variety of colors have been artificially laid. A tragedy affects even those who have the diffinctest knowledge of all the springs which the poet's genius and the player's abilities fet a-going, in order to move them.

The pleasure we receive from pictures and excellent dramatic poems is greater even upon our sceing them a second time, and when there is no further danger of being deluded. The first time a person beholds them he is dazzled with their beauties. Our mind too restless and volatile to fix itself upon one particular thing, enjoys in reality nothing: Eager of running over, and of beholding every thing, we have no diffinct fight of any one object. There is no body but has experienced the truth of what I here advance, when he has happened to light of a book which he impatiently longed for. Before he finds himfelf capable of reading the three or four first pages with a close attention, he is obliged, as it were, to run the book over from one end to the other. Thus when we fee an excellent tragedy, or a beautiful picture the fecond time, our mind fixes itself on the parts of the object, of which it had already a curfory view. The general idea of the work has taken its feat, as it were, in the imagination, because this idea must make some stay there, before it can be well rivetted; and then the mind refigns itself without any wandering, to whatever moves it. A person skilled in architecture does not examine a pillar; or inspect into a particular part of a palace, 'till after having given a glance over the whole pile of building, and fettled in his imagination a distinct idea of the edifice.

Vol. I.

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CHAP.

CHAP. XLIV.

That dramatic poems purge the passions.

TAD we but a just notion of the tyranny of the paffions, it would be capable of making us defire feriously to be never enslaved by them, and of engaging us in resolutions, which might prevent them from easily subduing us. person who is sensible of the inquietudes which love is apt to cause, who knows into what extravagancies it hurries the very wifest, and into what dangers it precipitates the most circumspect of men, will heartily wish never to be infnared by this bewitching passion. Now dramatic pieces, by fetting before our eyes the errors into which our passions lead us, give us a more sensible idea of their fymptoms and nature, than any book is capable of conveying. Hence it has been a maxim in all times, that tragedy purges the passions. Other poems indeed may produce some fimilar effect; but as the impression they make is not near fo great as that which a tragedy causes with the affiftance of the ftage; they have not therefore fo great an efficacy.

Those with whom we live and converse, leave us generally to guess at the true motive of their actions, and the real bottom of their hearts. That which seems outwardly but an inconsiderable spark, arises frequently from a conflagration which which makes a frightful havock within. We happen therefore oftentimes to deceive ourselves, by attempting to give a conjecture of the thoughts of men; and even they themselves deceive us more frequently in the accounts they give of the situation of their hearts. But the personages in tragedy throw off the mask in our presence; and consider all the spectators as considerts of their real projects, as well as of their most secret sentiments. They leave nothing for the spectators to guess at, but what can be easily and surely conjectured. The like may be also said of comedies.

Besides, the profession of a dramatic poet is to draw an exact and true picture of the passions, without exaggerating the vexations, or misfortunes that attend them. 'Tis by examples that he instructs us; and what ought to completely convince us of his fincerity, is that we fee ourselves in his pictures. Now a faithful image of the passions is fufficient to strike us with horror, and to induce us to determine resolutely to avoid them; for there is no necessity that this picture should be overloaded. Who is it, that after having feen Corneille's Cid. can help dreading a ticklish explication in one of those critical minutes in which our tempers are foured? What resolutions will not a person form of not conversing on things which he has very much at heart, at a time when an explication may very eafily terminate in a quarrel? Do not we promise naturally to be silent at least, on those occasions on which our imagination over-

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heated may make us fay three or four words, which we should be glad to redeem by a fix months silence? This dread of the passions must certainly be

productive of a good effect.

There are few passions but what are small sparks in the beginning, and may be easily extinguished, if a just distrust of ourselves would induce us to avoid all objects capable of increasing them. Phædra, a criminal against her will, is a fable like that of the birth of Bacchus and Minerva.

Let no body imagine here, that I suppose dramatic poems to be a fovereign and universal remedy in morals. I am far from entertaining any fuch thought; all that I intend to fay is, that they fometimes contribute to reclaim men, and frequently inspire them with a defire of growing 'Tis thus the spectacle contrived by the Lacedemonians, to inspire their youth with an aversion to drunkenness, produced its effect. The horror with which the extravagance and brutality of flaves exposed drunk upon the stage, struck the spectators, raised a firm resolution in them to refift the allurements of this vice. dered fome young people from drinking wine to excess, tho' it might not have been effectual enough to prevent the intemperance of others. There are some who are of too fiery and violent a temper to be restrained by examples, whose passions are too much inflamed to be extinguished by philosophical reflections. Tragedies therefore purge the passions in the same manner as medicines heal the body, and as defensive

fensive weapons preserve us from the injuries of offensive ones; that is, the thing will happen sometimes, but not always.

In what has been hitherto faid, I have supposed the morality of theatrical pieces as good as it really ought to be. Those dramatic poets, who have been worthy of the honor of writing for the stage, have always considered the inspiring us with an aversion to vice, and a love for virtue, as the principal obligation of their art. positively affirm, says Racine upon this subject ., that I never wrote a tragedy, where virtue is placed in a more amiable light than in this. The least faults are here severely punished. The very thought of a crime is looked upon with as much borror as the crime itself; and the foibles of love are considered as real weaknesses. The passions are exhibited to public view, only to point out the disorders which attend them; and vice is painted throughout in colors proper for detecting its deformity, and rendering it the object of our aversion. This is properly the. end, which every man who writes for the stage, ought to propose to himself, and which the most eminent tragic poets had always and principally in The theatre was to them an academy, where virtue was taught with as much purity as in the schools of philosophers.

Writers who feem to have a difficulty to comprehend, that tragedy purges the passions, alledge in justification of their fentiments, that the design of tragedy is to excite them. But a little reslec-

Preface to Phædra.

tion would have shewn the solution of this shadow of a difficulty, had they thought it worth their while to search for it.

Tragedy pretends indeed, that the passions it represents, should move us; but it does not intend that our emotion should be the same as that of a person tortured by his passion, or that we should espouse his sentiments. Its aim most frequently is to excite opposite fentiments to those, which it lends to the personages. For example, when tragedy exhibits Medea glutting her revenge by the murder of her own children, it draws her picture in fuch a manner, as inspires us with the horror of revenge; a passion capable of hurrying us into fuch execrable excesses. The poet pretends to instil such sentiments only, as he gives to virtuous personages; and even of those he desires us to espouse such as are absolutely commendable. Now when tragedy is faid to purge the passions, this must be understood only of those that are vicious and prejudicial to fociety. Were it to give us a distaste for those passions that are useful to the community, such as the love of our country, the defire of glory, the fear of dishonor, &c. it would be intirely as vicious, as if it endeavored to fet vice in an amiable light.

True it is, that fome dramatic poets unskilled in their profession, and destitute of any knowledge of the manners, have frequently reprefented vice as a greatness of soul, and virtue as a meanness of mind and heart. But this de-

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fect must not be imputed to the art, but to the ignorance or depravity of the artist. A surgeon, who lames those he bleeds, is faid indeed to be a bungler, but the ignorance of this fellow neither discourages bleeding, nor discredits the pro-An indifcreet author writes a fession of surgery. comedy, which subverts one of the principal elements of fociety; that is, the perfuafion which children should have, that their parents love them better than themselves. He makes his plot consist chiefly in the wiles of a father, who fets the most refined knavery to work, to lock up his children who are extremely well bred, in order to feize on their fortunes, and to enjoy them in company with an infamous miftress. The author here mentioned exposes this mystery of iniquity on the stage, without rendering it more odious, than Terence has endeavoured to render the juvenile tricks of Æschinus and Pamphilus, whom the fire and vigor of their youth hurries, in spite of their remorfe, into failings, which the world excuses; and whose fathers themselves do not despair of them fo much as they pretend. Besides, the plot of Terence's pieces finishes with an unravelling, which puts the fon in a capacity of fatisfying both his duty and inclination. The paternal tenderness struggling with reason, the agitations of a well-bred fon tormented with the fear of either disobliging his parents, or of losing his mistress, furnish room for several engaging incidents, from whence a very useful morality may be extracted. But the barbarity of a father, who A a 4 wants.

CHAP. XLV.

Of Music, properly so called.

It remains now, that we treat of music, as the third of those means, which men have invented, in order to add a new strength to poetry, and to render it capable of making a greater impression. Wherefore as the painter imitates the strokes and colors of nature, in like manner the musician imitates the tones, accents, sighs, and instexions of the voice; and in short all those.

those founds, by which nature herself expresses her fentiments and passions. These, as we have already observed, have a surprizing power of moving us, by reason of their being signs instituted by nature, from whence they receive their energy; whereas articulate words are arbitrary figns of passions, and draw their fignification and value from human institution, which has been able to render them current only in particular countries.

Music, in order to render the imitation of natural founds more capable of moving and pleafing, has reduced it to the continued modulation or finging, called the fubject. It has also found out two means to render this modulation more capable of moving and delighting us: the one is harmony, and the other the rhythmus.

The concords in which harmony confifts, have a most pleasing attractive for the ear, and the concurrence of the different parts of a musical composition, which form these concords, contributes also to the expression of the found the musician intends to imitate. The thorough base and the other parts affift the modulation greatly in expreffing the subject of imitation.

The ancients gave the name of rhythmus in music to what we call measure and movement. Now tis this measure and movement that give life, as it were, to a musical composition. The knowledge of the rbythmus, by directing the proper variation of measure, takes off from music that uniformity of cadence, which would foon render

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it tireform and disagreable. In the next place, the rhythmus throws a new likeness into the imitation arising from a musical composition, because it produces also an imitation of the progression and movement of the natural sounds already imitated by the modulation and harmony.

Music therefore forms its imitations by the help of singing, harmony, and rbythmus². 'Tis thus likewise painting forms its imitations, by the assistance of the strokes, the chiaro-scuro, and the local colors.

The natural figns of the passions, which music collects and employs with art, in order to increase the energy of the words she sets, ought to render them more capable of moving us, because these natural signs have a surprizing power over us. This they have from nature itself; for, as one of the most judicious inquirers into the human affections remarks, bnothing is more naturally agreable to our minds than numbers and sounds, for by these our passions are excited and instanted, and by these also we are soothed and taught to languish. By this means the pleasure of the ear is communicated to the heart. Hence songs have had their first

In cantu tria pracipue notanda sunt, harmonia, sermo, & rhythmus. Harmonia versatur circa sonum. Sermo circa verborum intellectum & enuntiationem distinctam. Rhythmus circa concinnum cantici motum.

b Nihil est enim tam cognatum mentibus nostris, quam numeri atque voces, quibus & excitamur, & incendimur, & lenimur, & languescimus. Cic. 1. 3. de orat.

rise; and upon people's observing afterwards, that the words had quite another energy when sung, than when only declaimed, the use of musical recitatives was introduced upon the stage, till at length they ventured to sing a whole dramatic piece. This is the real origin of our operas.

There is therefore some truth in the recitatives of operas, which consists in the imitation of such tones, accents, sighs, and sounds, as are naturally suitable to the sentiments which the words contain. The same truth may be discovered in the harmony and rhythmus of the whole composition.

Music is not satisfied with imitating in its modulations the inarticulate language of man, and the several sounds which he makes use of by instinct; it has also attempted to form imitations of all the other natural sounds, which are most capable of making an impression upon us. It employs only instruments in imitating inarticulate sounds, and these imitations are called symphonies; yet these symphonies act, in a manner, several parts in our operas with considerable success.

In the first place, the this kind of music be merely instrumental, yet it contains a true imitation of nature. In the next place, there are several sounds in nature capable of producing a great effect upon us, when we hear them seasonably in the scenes of a dramatic piece.

The truth of the imitation in symphonies consists in their resemblance with the sounds they are

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intended

intended to imitate. There is truth in a symphony composed for the imitation of a tempest, when the modulation, harmony, and rbythmus, convey to our ear a sound like the blustering of the winds in the air, and the bellowing of the waves, which dash impetuous against one another, or break against the rocks. Such is the symphony which imitates a tempest in the opera of Alcione by Monsieur Marais.

Wherefore, tho' these symphonies do not produce any articulate founds, they act notwithstanding a very useful part in dramatic pieces, because they contribute to engage us to the action, by making almost the same impression upon us, as would arise from the very found they imitate, were we to hear it under the same circumstances as the symphony. For instance, the imitation of the noise of a tempest, which is just going to fink a personage in whose favor the poet has deeply engaged us, affects us exactly as we should be moved with the bluftering of a tempest just ready to plunge into the waves a person for whom we had a sincere affection, were this a real tempest, and we near enough to hear it. 'Tis needless to repeat, that the impression of the symphony cannot be so strong as that which is made by a real tempest; for I have several times observed already, that the impression arising from an imitation, is much weaker than that of the thing imitated a.

^{*} Sine dubio in omni re vincit imitationem veritas. Cic. de orat. 1. 3.

Tis not therefore at all surprizing, that symphonies should move us exceedingly; tho' their sounds, as Longinus observes, are only images and simple imitations of the voice, which really express nothing, being, as it were, mere bastard sounds, and not the genuine effects of human nature.

Hence the inarticulate founds of instruments have been employed in all countries and ages, to move the hearts of men, and to inspire them with particular fentiments, especially on occasions where it was impossible to convey them by the affiftance of language. Civilized nations have always made use of instrumental music in their religious worship. The inhabitants of all countries have had their proper instruments for war; and have made use of their inarticulate music, not only to render the word of command intelligible to those whose business it is to obey, but likewise to excite, and even fometimes to restrain the ardor of their foldiers. These instruments were differently touched, according to the effect expected from them; and people endeavoured to render their founds fuitable to the use they were designed for.

We too should probably have studied the art of touching military instruments as much as the ancients, if the thundering of fire arms left our

^{*} Καί τοι τὰ τοιαῦλα εἴδωλα, καὶ μιμήμαλα, νόθα ἐςὶ ᢍειθες, ἐχὶ τῆς ἀνθεωπείας Φύσεως, ὡς ἔφην, ἐνεεργήμαλα γνήσια. Long. de Subl. c. 34.

The symphonies of our operas, and especially those of Lulli, the greatest musical poet among those whose works are extant, give a probability to the most surprizing effects of the music of the ancients. Perhaps the military clangor of Thefeus, the foft founds of Armidas, and feveral other fymphonies of the fame author, would have produced fuch effects as feem fabulous in the accounts given by ancient authors, were they to be heard by people of as great vivacity of temper as the Athenians, and in entertainments where they had been previously moved by the action of a tragedy. Do not we ourselves feel that these airs make fuch impressions on us as the musician defires? Do not we perceive that these symphonies inflame us, calm us, foften us, and, in fhort, operate upon us, as effectually almost as Corneille's or Racine's verses?

Had the anonymous author of the treatife De poematum cantu & viribus rbythmi, whom I suppose to be Isaac Vossius, because his friends have told me so, and by reason this work is sull of prejudices

judices in favor of China and its inhabitants, prejudices that every body knows were peculiar to this great man; had, I fay, this author but heard the operas of Lulli, and principally his latter ones, before he wrote the treatife abovementioned, he would never have faid a, that the modern music has neither the force, nor energy of the ancient. " We must not be surprized (this is the " purport of his words) that our music does not " produce the same effect, as that of the an-" cients, fince the most varied tunes and the " richest harmony are only sonorous trifles and " harmonious nonfenfe, when a mufician does " not know how to make a proper use thereof " in order to express justly his subject; and " when he cannot animate also his composition " with a suitable rhythmus, so as to give it a sit " and fensible meaning."

If any modern music is bare of the merit here mentioned by Vossius, certainly it is not that of Lulli; for what Vossius calls verborum intellectum, or the expression, is perfect in this musician. Those who do not understand French, can guess at the sentiments and passions of the actors, who declaim with his music. Let us only imagine what comparison Vossius would have made between the Italian sonatas and cantatas, and the symphonies and

recitatives

² Quippe cum omnis cantus & harmonia quantumvis elegans, si & verborum intellectus & motus absint aliquid significantes, nibil nisi inanem continent sonum, nemini mirum videri debet abesse ab bodierna musica virtutem quæ tantopere in veteri prædicatur. In præfat.

recitatives of Lulli, had he known them when he published that work. But it seems by the date placed at the bottom of his preface, that he wrote it in the year 1671, exactly at the time when Lulli

was composing his first opera.

Symphonies therefore that are well characterifed and fuitable to the subject, contribute vastly to engage us to the action of the opera, in which we may fay they act a part. The fiction which lays Atys afleep, and prefents him with fuch diversified objects during his slumber, is rendered more probable and moving, by the impreffion we receive from the symphonies of different characters which precede his fleep, and from the proper fuccession of airs whilst it continues. The fymphony in the opera of Rowland, which is commonly called Logistille, plays its part very well in the action where it is introduced. action of the fifth act, where it is placed, confifts in restoring Rowland to his senses, who went off the stage quite raving mad at the end of the fourth This delightful music gives us an idea of those symphonies which Cicero and Quintilian fay the Pythagoreans made use of, to calm, before they went to bed, the tumultuous ideas which the buftle of the day had left in their imaginations; in the fame manner as they employed fymphonies of an opposite nature, to put the spirits in motion when they awaked, in order to render

themselves

^{*} In form of an epiftle to my Lord Arlington.

POETRY and PAINTING. 369 themselves fitter for application². To mention it only transiently, the first brisk air of the prologue

of Amadis, which comes when his sleep is over, gives us an idea of the airs, whose sounds awaked

the Pythagoreans.

To return to the fymphony of the opera of Rowland, which gives us an idea of the airs, which disposed the Pythagoreans for sleep, it has intirely the truth of imitation, and is most likely to produce the effect for which the musician designed it. The sentiment arising from thence convinces us directly, that it is very proper for calming the agitations of the mind; and as an exact discussion justifies always our sensitive perception, we find upon inquiry the reasons which render it so proper for making this impression.

'Tis not silence that is the fittest remedy for calming the agitations of a distempered mind. We are taught by experience and reason, that there are several sounds more proper for calming the spirit, than silence itself. Such are those, which, like that of Logistille, continue a long time almost in an equal movement, while the subsequent sounds are neither much acuter nor graver, neither much slower nor quicker, than the preceding; insomuch that the progression of the mo-

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Pythagoreis certè moris fuit, & cum evigilassent animos ad lyram excitare, quò essent ad agendum erectiores, & cum somnum peterent, ad eandem priùs lenire mentes, ut si quid suisset turbidorum negotiorum, componerent. QUINT. Inst. 1, 3. c. 9.

dulation is frequently made by leffer intervals. It feems that founds, which are not accelerated or retarded with regard to the intonation and movement, but by a flow and uniform proportion, are more proper for restoring the mind to that even course which constitutes tranquillity, than a silence which would let them purfue the violent and tumultuous course into which they had been first hurried. A man that talks a great while in the fame tone of voice, fets the rest of the company asleep; and a proof that their drowsiness proceeds from the continuation of the same tenor of found, is, that the auditor starts immediately out of his fleep if the orator ceases of a sudden to speak, or if he happens to make fome exclamation in a much higher tone than that in which he was declaiming. We have daily examples of people troubled with infomny, who are lulled to fleep by the found of a lecture or conversation; but as soon as the found is over, they awake directly.

There is therefore a probability in fymphony, as in poetry. As the poet is obliged to conform in his fictions to the truth of agreement; in like manner the musician ought to conform to this truth in the composition of his symphonies. Let us explain this point. Musicians frequently compose symphonies to express founds we never heard, and which never perhaps existed in nature. Such is the bellowing of the earth when Pluto rushes forth from hell; the whistling of the air when Apollo inspires Pythia; the noise which 2 ghost makes coming out of its tomb; and the trembling

trembling of the leaves of the oaks of Dodona. There is a truth of agreement in these symphonies; and Horace's convenientia finge takes place here as well as in poetry. We are fensible when the requisite probability is observed in these pieces; which is certainly attended to, when they produce an effect fimilar to that which would naturally arise from the founds they imitate, and when they feem conformable to founds unheard, whereof we have notwithstanding a confused idea by a relation to known founds. We fay therefore of fymphonies of this kind, as well as of those which imitate real founds, that they express well or ill. We commend the symphony of the tomb of Amadia, and that of the opera of Iste, by faying the imitation is very natural, tho' we have never beheld nature in the circumstances in which those fymphonies pretend to copy it. Wherefore tho' they are mere inventions of fancy, yet they contribute very much to render the spectacle affecting, and the action pathetic. For example, the funeral accents of the fymphony, which Lulli has inferted in the scene of the opera of Amadis a, where the ghost of Ardan comes out of his tomb, make as great an impression upon our ear, as the show and representation have upon our eyes. Our imagination attacked at one and the same time by the organs of fight and hearing, is much more moved with the apparition of the ghost, than if only our eyes were deluded. The symphony, with which Monsieur des Touches * Act 3.

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ushers in the oracle uttered by the oaks of Dodona, produces a like effect. The trembling of the leaves of those trees which it imitates by its harmony and rhythmus, disposes us to find a probability in the supposition which is going to lend them speech. It seems probable that some sound, like that of this symphony, preceded and prepared the articulate sounds pronounced by the oracle.

But these symphonies, which seem so delightful when used in the imitation of a particular found, would be infipid and difagreable, were they to be employed as the imitation of a different found. The fymphony of the opera of Iste abovementioned would appear ridiculous, were it to be substituted instead of that of the tomb of Amadis. These musical pieces, which make so sensible an impression upon us when they constitute a part of the theatrical action, would afford but very little pleasure if they were to be heard as sonatas, or as detached scraps of symphonies, by a person who never heard them at the opera, and who would confequently pass judgment on them, without being acquainted with their greatest merit; that is, with the relation they have to the action, in which they play, as it were, their part.

The first principles therefore of music are the same as those of poetry and painting. Music, like these two arts, is an imitation; and like these arts it must conform to the general rules with respect to the choice of the subject, the probability, and several other points. All the liberal arts, as

mutual affinity.

As there are some who are more affected with the coloring of pictures, than with the expreffion of the passions; in like manner there are people who are only pleased with the agreableness of the finging, or with the richness of the harmony, without confidering attentively, whether this finging imitates the proper found, or whether it be fuitable to the meaning of the words to which it is adapted. They do not require the musician to fit his melody to the fentiments contained in the words he fets to music; but are fatisfied, that his modulations be varied, graceful, or even whimfical, fo as they give a transient expression of some of the words of the recitative. The number of musicians who conform to this tafte, as if music were incapable of doing any thing better, is but too confiderable. If they fet to music, for example, the verse of the pfalm The Lord faid unto my Lord, which begins with these words, be shall drink of the brook in the way, they dwell intirely upon the expreffion of the rapidity of the brook in its course, without attending to the fense of the verse, which contains a prophecy on the passion of Christ. And yet the expression of a word can never affect us as

^{*} Omnes artes quæ ad bumanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam commune vinculum, & quasi cognatione quadam inter se continuentur. Cic. pro Archia.

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much as that of a fentiment, unless a fentiment be contained in this fingle word. If a musician pays some regard to the expression of a word, he ought to do it without losing sight of the general purport of the phrase which he has set to music.

I should willingly compare a piece of music, whose composer is unskilled in the art of moving us, to a picture that is only well colored, or to a poem that has nothing to recommend it but the versification. As the beauties of execution in poetry and painting ought to be employed in difplaying the graces of invention and the strokes of genius which paint the object imitated; fo the richness and variety of concords, the charms, and novelty of modulations should be applied to no other use in music but that of drawing and imbellishing the imitation of the language and pasfions of nature. That which is called the knowledge of composition, is a handmaid (to make use of this expression) which a musical genius ought to entertain in his fervice, in the fame manher as a poet's genius should keep the knack of rhiming. He is undone (to continue the figure) if the maid makes herfelf mistress of the house, and has liberty to dispose of it according to her own fancy and pleasure. I am apt to think, that all poets and musicians would be of my opinion, were it not easier to rhime exactly, than to sustain a poetic stile; or to find such modulations as are both natural and agreable, without exceeding the limits of probability. But 'tis impossible to attain

to the pathetic without a genius; tho' to compose learnedly in music, or to rhime with facility, requires no such assistance, it being sufficient for that purpose to have professed either of these arts.

CHAP. XLVI.

Some reflections on the Italian music. That the Italians did not cultivate this art till after the French and Flemings.

HIS discourse seems naturally to lead me to speak of the disserence between the Italian and French taste in music. I mean the present taste of the Italians, which is much wider from the French, than it was under the pontificate of Urban the VIII. Tho' nature does not alter, and consequently one should think, that the taste of music ought not to change, yet it has certainly varied in Italy. There is in that country a fashion for music, as in France for dress and equipage.

Foreigners seem to agree, that we understand the movement and measure better than the Italians, and consequently that we succeed better in that part of music which by the ancients was called rhythmus. In fact, the ablest violins in Italy would execute but poorly one of Lulli's gavottes, much less any of his characterised symphonies. They the Italians make a very great study

of measure, yet, methinks, they do not underfland the *rhythmus* as well as we, so as to employ it justly in the expression, or adapt it properly to the subject of imitation.

If abbot Gravina (a writer whom we have had already occasion to take notice of) does not commend the French music as much as Vossius, yet he rails more against the Italian. But I shall give this author's remarks in his own words; "The music which we hear now on our stages is far from producing the same effects as that of the ancients. Instead of imitating and expressing the meaning of the words, it contributes only to enervate and choak it: Wherefore it is as disagreable to those who have a justness of taste, as it is pleasing to such as differ from reason. In fact, vocal music ought to imitate the natural language of the human passions, rather than

Itali longioribus utuntur flexibus, unde ridentur a Gallis, weluti qui uno formando pfalmate utrumque exhauriunt pulmonem. Galli præterea in suo cantu rithmum magis observant quèm Itali, unde sit ut apud illos complura occurrant cantica, quæ concinnos & elegantes admodum habent motus. Voss. de poem. cant. p. 123.

b Corre per gli theatri a d'i nostri una musica sterile di tali esfetti, (the author had been speaking of the marvelous essects of the music of the ancients) e perciò da quella assai dissorme, e si esalta per lo più quell' armonia, la quale quanto alletta gli animi stemperati e dissonanti, tanto lacera coloro che danno a guidare il senso a la ragione; perchè in cambio di esprimere ed imitare, suol piu tosto estinguere e cancellare ogni sembianza di verità: Se pur non godiamo, che in cambio di esprimere sentimenti e passioni umane ed imitar le nostre attioni e costumi, somigli ed imiti,

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the finging of canary birds, which our music affects so vastly to mimic with its quaverings and boasted cadences. Tho' we have at present a very skilful musician*, and a man of good sense, who is not carried away with the torrent. But our poetry having been corrupted by the excess of ornaments and sigures, the contagion has spread itself into our music. 'Tis the sate of all arts, which have a common origin and object, that the infection

passes from one to the other. Our music

imiti, come fà sovente con quei trilli tanto ammirati, la lecora o'l canario: Quantunque a di nostri vada sorgendo qualche destro modulatore, (* the author is supposed to have meant here Signor Buononcini) il quale contro la commun corruttela da natural giudizio e proporzion di mente portato, imita anche spesso la natura, a cui più si avvicinarebbe, se l'antica arte musica potesse da si lunghe e folte tenebre alzare il capo. Né ci dobbiamo maravigliare, se corrotta la poesia, s'é anche corrotta la musica, perchè come nella ragion poetica accennammo, tutte le arti imitative banno una idea commune, dalla cui alterazione fi alterano tutte, e particolarmente la mufica dall' alterazion della poesia si cangia, come dal corpo l'ombra. Onde corrotta la poessa da i soverchi ornamenti e dalla copia delle figure, hà communicato anche il suo morbo alla musica, ormai tanto sfigurata, che hà perduta quasi la natural espressione. Né perchè reca diletto all' oreccbio, perciò si dee convenevole alla tragedia riputare; poiche il diletto proprio della mufica dramatica è quello che nasce dalla imitazione. Mà il piacer presente nasce prima dalla mancanza della vera idea, e poi per accidente da quella qualfifia modulazione di voce, che lufinga e molce la parte animale, cioè il senso solo senza concorso della ragione, come sà qualsivoglia canto di un cardello, o di un usignuolo; e come dalla vivezza e varietà de colori dilettano, senza imitazione di verità, le pitture Chinesi. Abbate Gravina della Tragedia, p. 70.

is therefore so loaded at present with such trisses and gewgaws, that we can hardly trace any remains of the natural expression. Nor, tho' it flatters the ear, is it therefore fit for tragedy; because the imitation and expression of the inarticulate language of the passions is the chief merit of dramatic music. If our music is still agreable to us, 'tis because we know no better, and it tickles the ear, which it does in common with the warbling of goldsinches and nightingales. Itresembles those Chinese pictures which have no imitation of nature, and are only pleasing by reason of the vivacity and variety of their colors."

I do not chuse to enter here into a further inquiry concerning the merit of French and Italian mufic. This is a subject that has been canvassed within these few years by several men of understanding. Besides, it would be necessary, methinks, to commence it with a preliminary question, the discussion whereof would be too tedious. I should be obliged to examine into the opinion of an English writer, a man of wit and abilities, who reproaching his countrymen with the tafte which feveral of them feem to have for the Italian operas, maintains that there is a music suitable to each language, and particularly adapted to each nation. According to this writer, French music is good in its kind, and fo is the Italian. "The mufic of the French is indeed very properly adapted to their pro-

² Spectator April the 3d. 1711. Nº. 29.

derfully favours the genius of such a gay airy people. The chorus in which that opera abounds gives the parterre frequent opportunities of joining in concert with the stage. This inclination of the audience to sing along with the latters, so prevails with them, that I have sometimes known the performer on the stage do no more in a celebrated song, than the clerk of a parish church, who serves only to raise the psalm, and is afterwards drowned in the music

of the congregation.

Jana.

I shall be contented therefore with making fome historical remarks concerning the Italian music. The author of a poem in four cantos on music ", wherein we find a great deal of wit and good fense, pretends, that when people began towards the fixteenth century to shake off their barbarousness, and to cultivate the polite arts, the Italians were the first musicians, and that other nations afterwards made use of their improvements to perfect this art. The fact does not appear to me to be true. Italy was indeed at that time the nurlery of architecture, painting, and foulpture, but music was revived in the Low Countries; or to speak more properly, it had florished there already a long time, with a fuccess which all Europe revered and acknowledged. I could alledge in proof hereof Commines and feveral other writers, but I shall be satisfied with quoting one unexceptionable witness, whose depo-

Printed in the year 1713.

fition is fo very circumstantial, as to exclude all possibility of doubt. This is a Florentin, Lewis Guicciardin, nephew to Francis Guicciardin the famous hiftorian. Let us hear what he fays in a general discourse upon the Netherlands which is by way of preface to his description of the seventeen provinces, a book very well known and translated into feveral languages. Our Flemings are the patriarchs of music, which they have revived, and carried to a great pitch of perfection. They are born with a very bappy genius for cultivating it, and their abilities in the practice are so great, that the men and women of this country fing almost all of them naturally with justness and grace. By adding afterwards art to nature, they are admired for their composition, as well as for the execution of their songs and symphonies in all the courts of Christendom, where their merit raises them to very handsome fortunes. I shall mention only the names of such as have died lately, and of those that are yet living. In the number of the first we rank John Teinturier of Nivelle, whose eminent merit will oblige me prefently to take more particular notice of him, Joshua Duprat, Albert Ockegbuem, Richefort, Adrian, Villart, John Mouton, Verdelot, Gombert, Lupus Louvart, Courtier, Créquillon, Clément, Cornelius Hont. Among the living we reckon Cyprian de la Rosee, John Cuick, Philippe du Mont, Rowland Lasse, Mancicourt, Joshua Baston, Christian Hol-

Edit. Janff. p. 1.

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land, James Vas, Bonmarchez, Severin Cornet. Peter Hot, Gerard Tornbout, Hubert Valerand, James Berchems of Antwerp, Andrew Pevernage, Cornelius Verdonk, and several others dispersed throughout all the courts of Christendom, where they bave made very good fortunes, and continue to be bonored as masters of this art. In fact the posterity of Mouton and Verdelot have been celebrated in France for music, even down to our days. 'Tis observable, that Lewis Guicciardin, who died in the year of the accession of our Henry IV to the crown a, mentions the cuftom which the Netherlands had of furnishing Europe with musicians, (in the same manner as Italy conjointly with France does in our days) as a custom of a very long standing.

Even Italy herself, who fancies at present that other nations know no more of music than what they learnt of her, had her musicians from our parts before the last century, and payed then the same tribute to the artists on this side of the Alps, as she pretends now to receive from all the people of Europe. I remember to have met in some Italian writers with several passages which prove this affertion, but I think it more adviseable to spare the reader the trouble of perusing, and myself the trouble of finding them. Besides, I do not conceive that there is any stronger proof requisite, than the abovecited passage

[.] In the year 1589.

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of Guicciardin. I shall however content myself with producing one passage more, and this from Corio, who has given us a history of Milan, a very curious work, and well known by all the learned. In the account which Corio gives of the death of Duke Galeazzo Storza Viss conti, who was assassinated in the year 1474 in the church of St Stephen at Milan, he says, a The Duke was very fend of music, which made him keep thirty foreign musicians in pay, to whom he allowed very considerable salaries. One of them, whose name was Cordier, received of that prince a bundred ducats a month.

The mistake of imagining the Italians to have been the first restorers of music in Europe, has led the poet here mentioned into another error, which is his making an Italian of Rowland Lasse, one of the musicians of the Low Countries commended by Guicciardin. This poet quotes him therefore by the name of Orlando Lasso, and tells us that he was one of the first restorers of music. But this Orlando Lasso, tho' we meet with him in fome misinformed authors with both his names terminated after the Italian manner, was no more an Italian than Scarron's Ferdinando Ferdinandi, who was a native of Caen in France. The mistake arises from this, that Rowland Lasse has prefixed to feveral Latin pieces his firname latinized into Orlandus Lassus, according to the custom of that time of latinizing firnames. Some body that had a notion that every good musician

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must have been an Italian, italianized both his names, when translating them into French. Rowland Lasse was a Frenchman, as the most part of the muficians mentioned by Guicciardin, taking the name of Frenchman in its most natural fignification, which implies all those people whose maternal language is French, in whatever prince's dominions they are born. As a man born at Strasburg is a German, tho' he is a subject of the King of France, fo a man born at Mons in Hainault is a Frenchman, tho' he be a subject of another prince, by reason that the French tongue is in Hainault the natural language of the country. Now Rowland Laste, who died during the reign of our Henry the IV, was a native of Mons, as may be proved from the history of Monfieur de Thou, who makes a very long panegyric on this musician 2. Neither can it be said that Lasse must be reputed an Italian, because Italy was his country by choice. For after having dwelt in feveral parts of Europe, he died in the fervice of William Duke of Bavaria, and was interred at Munich. In fine, this musician is later in time than Gaudimelle and feveral other excellent musicians, who flourished under Henry the II. and Francis the I.

But let us return to the operas, and the energy which verses receive from music. The addition which poetry receives from the musician's art, supplies in some measure the want of probability in this spectacle. 'Tis quite contrary to probability,

Lib. 119. pag. 459.

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(some will say) that actors should speak always in Alexandrine verses, as they do in our common tragedies. This I grant, as likewise that the probability suffers by those actors, who treat of their passions, quarrels, and interests in music. Nevertheless the pleasure we receive from music, makes amends for this defect; and its expressions give a pathetic to the opera, not-withstanding the want of probability.

We weep therefore at some moving operas, as we do at the affecting scenes of recited tragedies. The adieus of Iphigenia to Clitemnestra never drew more tears from the spectators at the Hotel de Bourgogne, than the discovery of Iphigenia and Orestes have caused to be shed at the opera. Boileau might have applied to the person who played the part of Iphigenia in Duché's opera some years ago, what he said of the actress, who acted the same personage in his friend's tragedy.

Jamais Iphigénie en Aulide immolée N'a coûté tant de pleurs à la Grece assemblée, Que dans l'heureux spectacle à nos yeux étalé, En a fait sous son nom verser la Chanmessé²,

At Aulis, when fair Iphigenia bled, Not half so many tears the Græcians shed, As when Chanmele, with her name disguis'd, Was in thy Iphigenia sacrific'd.

In his letter to Racine.

In fhort the fenses are so vastly flattered by the singing of the recitatives, as well as by the harmony that accompanies them, by the chorus's, the symphonies, and the whole spectacle, that the soul which is easily seduced by pleasure, is inchanted by a siction, tho' the illusion is very

palpable. Ex voluptate fides nascitur.

I speak here of the generality of men. For as there are a great many, who being too susceptible of the impressions of music, attend to nothing but the charms of the modulation, and the richness of the harmony, and insist upon the composer's facrificing every thing to these beauties; so there are some so insensible of the pleasures of music, and whose ears, to make use of this expression, are so very remote from their hearts, that the most natural modulations have no effect upon them. 'Tis sit that such people as these should be tired at the opera. All the art a musician is master of cannot compensate the pleasure they are deprived of by the want of probability, a very essential defect in a poem, and yet an inseparable one from an opera.



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CHAP. XLVIII.

What kind of verses are properest to be set to music.

A FTER what has been faid, I will venture to affirm, that, generally speaking, music has a greater efficacy than simple declamation, by giving a greater force to such verses, as are sit for its uses: But they are not all adapted alike to this purpose, nor equally capable of re-

ceiving the same energy from music.

We have observed, when treating of the poetic style, that it ought to express the sentiments in simple terms; but it should represent all other objects to us, by images and pictures. We have shewn, when speaking of music, that it ought to imitate in its modulations, the tones, sighs, accents, and all such inarticulate sounds of the voice as are natural signs of our sentiments and passions. 'Tis a consequence that may be easily inferred from these two truths, that verses which are filled with sentiments are properest to be set to music, and those which contain images are not so proper.

Nature itself furnishes us, in a manner, with modulations for expressing the sentiments. We cannot pronounce those verses with warmth, which contain any tender and moving sentiments, without breaking out into sighs, and employing accents and instexions of the voice, which a man en-

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dowed with a musical genius, reduces easily to a continued modulation. Certain I am, that Lulli was not long in search of the tune of these verses, which Medea sings in the opera of Theseus.

Mon cœur auroit encore sa premiere innocence S'il n'avoit jamais eu d'amour.

My heart might still it's innocence have kept,

Had it not loved ————

I affirm moreover, that a man of genius, who composes on such-like words, discovers that he has varied his melody, without having even so much as thought of diversifying it. Each sentiment has its proper tones, accents, and sighs. Wherefore a musician composing on such as the above-cited verses, forms modulations as various, as nature herself is varied.

Verses which contain pictures and images, and have frequently the name of poetry by way of preference, do not lay open so fair a field to the musician for shewing his abilities. Nature furnishes hardly any thing for the expression. 'Tis art alone can assist the musician, who would attempt to set to music such verses as these, in which Corneille draws so lively a picture of the triumvirate.

Le méchant par le prix au crime encouragé, Le mari dans son lit par sa femme égorgé:

Cc 2

Le fils tout dégoutant du meurtre de son pere, Et sa tête a la main demandant son salaire, &c.

The villain whom the bribe to crime invites; The husband murdered by his wife in bed; The son imbru'd with blood, and stretching forth His father's head, demands for th' impious deed The promis'd recompence, &c.

In fact a musician obliged to set such verses as these. would find but very little resource for his melody in the natural declamation of the words. He must therefore throw himself into such modulations, as are rather noble and imposing than expressive; and as nature does not affift him to vary these modulations, he must fall at length into a disagreable uniformity. Since music therefore adds hardly any energy at all to verses whose beauty consists in images; fince, it rather enervates their force, by flackening the pronunciation; a good lyric poet, let him have ever fo rich a vein, will carefully avoid inferting fuch verses as those of Corneille above-cited. Wherefore the reproach cast upon Monsieur Quinault, when he wrote his first operas, that his verses were naked, and destitute of those images which form the sublime in poetry; this reproach, I fay, was extremely ill grounded; as that was esteemed a defect, which constituted his greatest merit. But they did not feem to understand at that time in France, the merit of

of verses composed for music. We had as yet wrote nothing but fongs, and as these little poems are only defigned for the expression of a few fentiments, they could not furnish room for the observations, which have been fince made on lyric poetry. As foon as we commenced to write operas, the spirit of philosophizing, which has an excellent hand in clearing up truth, provided it takes care not to run before experience, convinced us, that those verses which are most stocked with images, and generally fpeaking, are the most beautiful, are not the properest for music. There is no comparison between the two following stanzas, when they are only recited. The first is from the opera of Theseus wrote by Quinault.

Doux repos, innocente paix,

Heureux, beureux un cœur qui ne vous perd jamais!

L'impitoyable amour m'a toujours poursuivie,

N'étoit ce point assez des maux qu'il m'avoit faits?

Pourquoy ce Dieu cruel avec de nouveaux traits, Vient-il encore troubler le reste de ma vie?

Sweet peace and innocent repose,

How blest is he who tastes thy charms!

Whose heart no cares can discompose,

Nor bitter jealousy alarm.

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But I alas! am doom'd to spend

My days and nights, depriv'd of rest;

Pursu'd by plagues, that e'er attend

A miserable love-sick breast.

Stop, cruel love, keep back thy dart,

Enough; I can no more endure:

Heav'ns! 'tis too bard a fate to smart

With wounds, that death alone can cure.

The fecond is from the Idyllium on peace, by Monsieur Racine.

Déja grondoient les borribles tonnerres

Par qui sont brisez les remparts,

Déja marchoit devant les étendarts

Bellone les cheveux épars,

Et se flatoit d'éterniser les guerres

Que ses fureurs souffloient de toutes parts.

Now the dreadful cannons rumbling Roll their thunder thro' the sky; Now the lofty ramparts tumbling, All in shatter'd ruins lye.

Fierce Bellona foatt'ring terror,

Round th' embattled legions flew,

Clad in adamantine armor,

Deep imbru'd with purple bue.

Hissing snakes her bair intwining Fill'd the skies with poison'd breath, With the cruel goddess joining In her bloody schemes of death.

These two French stanzas are very far from having fucceeded alike in music. Thirty perhaps retain the first, for one that remembers the second; and yet they were both fet to music by Lulli, who had even ten years additional experience, when he composed the Idyllium on peace. But the reason is, the first includes the natural fentiments of a heart agitated with a new passion. The only image it contains, is that of love shooting his darts against Medea, an image that is extremely fimple. But Racine's verses display the most pompous images that poetry can be decked Those who can forget for a moment the effect produced by these verses, when they are fung, will with justice prefer Racine to Quinault.

'Tis therefore generally allowed at present, that Quinault's lyric verses are extremely well adapted to music, for the very reason which rendered them so liable to be censured at the commencement of our operas, that is by the character of their poetic style: but that they were also fit for that purpose by the mechanism of their composition, or the arrangement of the words regarded as fimple founds, is a truth which could never be reasonably contested.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Of Prints, and Poems in prose.

Should like to compare prints, where we find every part of the picture except the coloring, to romances written in profe, where we meet with the fiction and style of poetry; which renders them poems in every respect, exclusive of rhime and measure. The invention of prints, and that of poems in profe, are both of them equally excellent. By prints the pictures of the most celebrated artifts are infinitely multiplied. They render those capable of enjoying them, whom the distance of places has debarred from being so happy as to behold them. We fee from Paris by the affistance of prints, the finest beauties that Raphael has drawn on the walls of the Vatican. A private person can likewise bring within the compass of his own cabinet all the wit and poetry that are in the greatest master-pieces of painting; whose beauties seemed reserved for the cabinets of princes, or of fuch as have raifed themselves to fortunes equal to those of princes, by managing their finances. In like manner we are indebted to poetry in profe for feveral works filled with adventures, that are probable and marvelous at the same time, as also for precepts that are fage and practicable, which would never have feen public light, had the authors been obliged to submit their genius to the flavery of rhime and measure. The authors of the Princess of Cleves and Telemachus, would never have favored

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vored us perhaps with these works, had they been obliged to write them in verse. There are fine poems without verse, as there are fine verses without poetry, and good pictures without a rich coloring. It will avail very little to say, that the coloring is that which constitutes the painter, and that he understands his profession, only inasmuch as he knows how to color. This is alledging in proof a question, which even after inquiry must, methinks, be left undecided. But this is a point which requires a further explication.

CHAP. XLIX.

That it is useless to dispute, whether the part that takes in the design and the expression be preserable to that of the coloring.

The E perfection of the design, as well as that of coloring are real things, concerning which we may dispute and agree by the help of rule or comparison. Wherefore men of sense will agree among themselves with regard to the rank which Le Brun holds among the composers and designers, as well as to that which Titian has among the colorists. But the question, whether Le Brun be preferable to Titian; that is, whether the part of poetic composition and expression be superior to that of coloring, is, methinks, a

very unuseful point to examine. People of oppofite fentiments will never be able to agree about this pre-eminence, whereof we are always apt to judge by our own inclinations. According as we are more or less affected with the coloring, or with the picturefque poetry, we prefer the colorist to the poet, or the poet on the contrary to the colorift. The greatest painter, with regard to us, is he

whose works afford us most pleasure.

Men are not equally affected either by the coloring. or the expression. There are some who have (if I may use this phrase) a more voluptuous eve Their eyes are organized in fuch a than others. manner, that the harmony and truth of colors affect them in a much livelier manner, than other people. Another man, whose eye has not fo happy a conformation, but who has a much fenfibler heart, finds in the moving expressions a superior pleasure to that, which he receives from the harmony and truth of local co-All men have not an equal delicacy in the same sense. Some have the sense of seeing better in proportion than the other fensitive faculties. Hence some prefer Poussin to Titian, and others the latter to the former.

Those who judge without reflection, generally suppose, that objects have the same inward effect upon others, as upon themselves. He that maintains the superiority of Poussin, cannot conceive how a poet, whose inventions afford him so exquisite a pleasure, can be ranked below an artist, who is only practifed in the disposition of colors; the the harmony and richness whereof have a very indifferent effect upon him. An admirer of Titian, on the other hand, complains of Pouffin's favorer, for preferring a painter unpractifed in the art of charming the eye to Titian, and this only for fome inventions, with which he fancies the generality of men are very little moved, as he is but very indifferently affected with them himself. The opinion of each person supposes, as a thing determined, that the part of painting which pleases himself most, ought to have the preference to the rest; wherefore by pursuing the same principle men find their sentiments differ. Trabit sua quemque voluptas. They would be quite right, were each person satisfied with judging for himfelf; but their mistake lies in attempting to judge for other people. Men are naturally inclinable. to believe their own tafte to be right, and of course they think, that those who do not judge as they do, have their organs imperfect, or that they are overfwayed by prejudices, without being fo much as fensible of the force of the prevention.

Whosoever therefore desires a person to alter his sentiment on things which depend purely upon taste, must first of all make him change his organs. But the best way is for every one to continue in their own opinion, without censuring that of others. To endeavour to convince a man that he is in the wrong, when he follows his own sentiment in preferring the coloring to the expression, is the same thing, as if you were to attempt

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to persuade him to take more pleasure in beholding Poussin's pictures than those of Titian. The thing depends no more on him, than it depends on a man whose palate is so formed, as to receive a greater pleasure from Champagne than Spanish wine, to alter his taste, and give Spanish wine the preference.

The prepoffession we have in favor of one part of painting preferable to another, depends no more on our reason, than the passion we have for one kind of poetry in preference to another. It depends intirely on our tafte; and this on our organization, present inclinations, and the situation of our When our taste happens to change, 'tis not because we have been persuaded into it, but there has been some physical alteration in our bodies. True it is, that this change is frequently fo infensible, that we cannot discover it but by the help of reflection, as it is made gradually and imperceptibly. Age and feveral other causes produce these changes. A melancholy passion renders us fond for a while of fuch books as fuit our present humor; but we alter our tafte as foon as we receive a glimpse of comfort. A person who in his early years was fonder of reading La Fontaine's fables, than Racine's tragedies, will give a preference to the latter when he comes to the age of thirty. I fay give a preference, which does not imply to praise the one and condemn the other; for when he prefers the reading of Racine's tragedies to that of the fables of La Fontaine, this does not hinder him him from praising at the same time, and even from being fond of those fables. The person here spoken of, when he is turned of fixty, will like Moliere's plays, which will exhibit fo perfectly to his view the different scenes of the world he has seen, and furnish him with frequent occasions of reflecting on what he has observed during the course of his life; better than he will like Racine's tragedies, for which he had fo great a tafte, when he was taken up with the passions described in those pieces. Particular taftes do not debar people from doing justice to good authors, nor from distinguishing those who have excelled even in that kind for which they have no inclination. But this is a fubject, which we shall explain more at large at the end of the fecond part of this work.

CHAP. L.

Of sculpture, and the abilities it requires; and of the art of Basso-relievos.

THATEVER has been faid with regard to the ordonnance and expression of pictures, may be likewise applied to sculpture. The chisel is capable of imitating, and in the hands of a man of genius, it knows how to engage us, almost as well as the pencil. True it is, that one may be a sculptor, without having so much invention as is necessary to form an excellent painter; but

if the sculptor has not so great an occasion for the poetic part, he can notwithstanding make such a use thereof, as may raise him much above the level of his competitors. There are feveral productions of sculpture sufficient to convince us. that in the hands of a man of genius this art is capable of the most noble operations of painting, Such is the history of Niobe, represented in fourteen or fifteen statues connected together by the fame action. The learned remains of this antique composition are to be seen at Rome in the Villa of Medicis. Such was the group of Alexander wounded and supported by his foldiers, of which Pasquin and the Trunk of Belveder are part of the figures. And to speak of modern sculpture, fuch is the tomb of Cardinal Richlieu, the rape of Proferpine by Girardon, the fountain of Piazza Navona, and the extafy of St Therese by Bernini, as likewise Algardi's Basso-relievo, which reprefents St Peter and St Paul in the air, menacing Attila on his march to plunder the city of Rome. This ferves for an altar-piece in the church of St Peter.

I am not even certain, whether it does not require a greater strength of genius to extract from marble such a composition as that of Attila, than to draw it upon canvas. In fact, the poetry and expressions thereof are as moving as that of Raphael's picture, in which he has treated the same subject; and the sculptor's execution, who seems to have found out the Chiaro-scuro with his chifel, is, methinks, a performance of greater merit, than

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that of the painter. The figures which are on the fore-part of this magnificent piece are almost in full relievo, and are real statues. Those that are behind have less relievo, and their strokes are more or less discernible, in proportion to the difference of their deepnings. In fine, the composition finishes with several figures, designed by simple touches on the furface of the marble. I do not pretend to commend Algardi, as if he had drawn from his own genius the first idea of this execution, nor for being the inventer of the great art of Low-relieves, but for having confiderably improved, by the work here mentioned, an art discovered before his time.

We do not find, at least by any of the remaining fragments of Greek and Roman sculpture, that this art was perfectly understood by the Their fculptors could only cut figures in relievo, perpendicularly down from head to foot, and clap them, as it were, on the ground of the Baffo-relievo, fo that the figures which deepned in, received no degradation of light. A tower which feems to be five hundred paces diftant from the fore-part of the Low-relieve, to judge by the proportion of a foldier mounted thereon, to the personages placed nearest the edge of the plain, this tower, I fay, is cut as if it were feen at the distance of fifty paces. We may perceive distinctly the joining of the stones, and reckon the tiles of the roof. 'Tis not thus that objects present themselves to us naturally. They appear not only fmaller in proportion to their remoteness.

moteness, but they are even confused, when they are at a certain distance, by the interposition of the air. The modern sculptors, better instructed herein than the ancients, confound the strokes of objects which fink into the Baffo-relievo, and thus preserve the rules of perspective. With two or three inches of relievo they make fome figures, which appear in full relievo, and others which feem to fink into the deepning. They represent also landskips thrown ingeniously into perspective by a diminution of the strokes, which being not only smaller, but likewise less distinct, and mixing with one another as they remove further off, produce the same effect almost in sculpture, as the degradation of colors in a picture. We may therefore venture to affirm, that the ancients had not this art in such perfection as we have it at prefent, tho' we meet with admirable fine figures in the antique Bafforelievos. Such are the women-dancers of the Louvre, copied after the antique Low-relieve at Rome, which fo many great sculptors have made the subject of their studies.

I do not find, that the recompence of thirty thousand crowns which Algardi received of Pope Innocent X. for his Basso-relievo, was more than he deserved. I could likewise shew, that Cavalier Bernini and Girardon have interspersed as much poetry in their works, as Algardi, were I not asraid of growing tiresome to my reader. I shall only therefore, from amongst all the inventions of Bernini, single out one stroke of art he

has

has shewn in his fountain in the piazza Navona, to express a particular circumstance of the course of the Nile, that is, the obscurity of its source; Nature, as Lucan fays, being unwilling that this river should ever appear in the diminutive figure of a brook.

Arcanum natura caput non protulit ulli, Nec licuit populis parvum te, Nile, videre. LUCAN. 1. 10.

Nature conceals thy infant stream with care, Nor lets thee but in majesty appear.

The head of the statue representing the Nile, which Bernini has diffinguished by the attributes affigned by the ancients to this river, is covered with a veil. This stroke, which was not borrowed of antiquity, but was the fculptor's own invention, expresses most ingeniously the great number of attempts, the ancients and moderns had made to discover the fource of the Nile, by tracing it up its channel. Bernini's allegory expresses most nobly the Nile's unwillingness to discover its fountain head. This was according to the opinion that prevailed at Rome under the Pontificate of Innocent X, when Bernini made this fountain. 'Tis true, the curious must have had already some knowledge of the discoveries made by the Fathers Emmanuel d'Almeida, and Jerome Lobo; tho' the history

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of the upper Ethiopia by father Tellez, who was the first that favored the public with these discoveries, had not yet appeared; for it was not printed 'till six years after the death of Innocent X. ^a But the particular relations, which the portuguese Jesuits transmitted to Rome, and what had been handed about from the accounts given by those fathers who were returned to Europe, might have already acquainted the curious that the source of the Nile was discovered at length in Abyssinia ^b.

Facts of a marvelous nature continue to be true with respect to poets of all kinds, a long while after they have ceased to be so with regard to historians and other writers, whose principal object is truth. I am even of opinion, that painters, poets, and fculptors ought to follow the most common and received notions of their times, relating to many phyfical, aftronomical, and geographical facts, tho' they happen to be justly contradicted by the learned. Thus the swallow's flight, which skims along the ground, must be reckoned timorous by the poet; tho' it be reputed a very bold flight by Borelli and other learned men, who have studied the mechanical structure of animals. They must also make the female of the bee-hive the king of the fwarm, and attribute to her all the ingenious things that have been faid concerning this pretended prince without a fling. I do not deny,

a Printed at Conimbra in 1661.

History of Ethiopia, at Alt. c. 6.

that, when these truths become common in process of time, poets must at length conform to them: However 'tis not their business to pretend to establish the like truths, nor to advance any thing that may clash with vulgar opinions; unless they should happen to write some of those pieces, which we have distinguished by the name of Dogmatic poems.

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